ART & CULTURE OF TAMILNAADU

R. Nagaswami

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Dedicated with reverence
to the Memory of
Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee
(*Nanneri Murugan*)

PREFACE

The collection of essays included in this volume will give a glimpse into the socio-cultural life of the Tamils and their achievements in certain fields of art in the medieval period. Like any other region of the country, the Tamil land had its distinct personality of its own, but from the beginning of the historical period, the pan-Indian character and cultural traits are reflected clearly in the regional literature and epigraphical records.

Often it has been said, in a loose manner, that the unity of India was ushered by the British administration. Nothing seems to be farther from truth. A study of the first chapter in this book would reveal, that though the country was ruled by different dynasties in different regions, mutually inimical to each other, the life of the people including that of the kings, in their religious and secular spheres, remained the same throughout the country. While in the North, the cultural current of the nation received a violent shake up from the 11th century onwards, due to foreign invasions, the extreme South retained the Indian cultural traits with comparitively less incursions till the middle 18th century A.D., and therefore, offers, valuable scope for studying Indian character in its ancient form. There were Hindu kingdoms ruling until A.D. 1730 in the South administering Indian code of law, administration and religious practices, a study of which is absolutely essential for an understanding of true India. It does not mean that the South remained in isolation, but has shown great ingenuity in assimilating the incoming ideas. That the agriculturists, the merchants, the Brahmins and the ruling class had a common base and at the sametime an individuality of their own will be seen from the first essay. Some aspects of their daily life is also sketched to give a proper appreciation of the society. The rights and previleges of the queen given in this chapter would

facilitate the reader to compare them with the ones that prevailed in other parts of India and the Western World. The titles assumed by the Chieftains in the medieval period, after the well-known places of India like Magada, Ayodhya, Vatsa, Chedi, Kalinga, Virata, etc., would show the veneration and aspiration, the Tamils had for these places of eminence.

This unity is certainly not an entity that flowered in the historical age. The commonness of the languages spoken by people seperated by over two thousand kilometres from Maharashatra in the North (or even Gujarat) to Kanyakumari in the South, when viewed against the material culture revealed by archaeological excavations would become meaningful and show that they had their roots in prehistoric times. This is suggested in the second chapter.

All classical art, architecture, and philosophy arise from simple, intimate folk traditions and beliefs. Even the concepts of God and their magnificant abodes gradually evolve from the village life and environments. The essay on village gods, focusses the attention on this aspect. The great art movements could properly be understood only against the background of the society that created the same. After giving the social life and the village concepts of God, the book carries a number of essays on some well-known and a few little known monuments and places of Tamil Nadu. A considerable number deal with bronzes for which the Tamil land has now attained fame. The article on astronomy shows how the Tamils made use of the same in their transactions.

The first chapter on 'Social and Cultural life of the Tamils' embodies basically two of the lectures, I delivered at Manipur, at the invitation of Atom Babu Research Institute in 1973. I thank Mr Sharma, the Trustee of the Institute for having given me this opportunity. Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the doyan of Indian scholars, who invited me to give these two lectures, likened Atom Babu to Agastya, the Vedic sage, who made the people of the South imbibe the great Indian Culture, by enriching the regional language, through his translations of Indian thought. Atom Babu's translation

of Indian literature into Manipuri is stupendous. Like the sages of Ancient India, Suniti Babu narrated to me the great work of Atom Babu and his contribution to the cultural integration of the country. I cannot adequately express the profound inspiration I derived from Suniti Babu's affectionate teachings, ever fresh in my mind. I respectfully dedicate this work to the memory of this savant.

Some of the other articles appearing in this book (in revised form) were contributed by me to various journals and weeklies like the Lalit Kala, the Hindu, Kalakshetra quarterly, etc. To the editors of these, I express my thanks. For permission to use photographs illustrated in this work I thank the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department and the French Institute of Indology Pandicherry. My thanks are also due to Mr. Swadesh Prasad of Sundeep Prakashan who has taken such a keen interest of this work and has published it in such a pleasant form.

To write numerically a great number of books is a temptation, but to write a sensible few, is a discipline. If this work comes closer to the latter, I would deem it a great honour.

R. Nagaswami

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THE ROYAL FAMILY

According to an ancient Tamil saying, the ruler is the soul of the Universe. From very early times, the king embodied the spirit of society. The divine origin of kingship was an accepted notion among the early Tamils. The *sangam* works and the post-*sangam* epics, the *Śilappadhikāram* and *Maṇimekhalai* make pointed references to this concept. The Chera king, Senguttuvan is said to have inherited the grace of Lord Śiva. By the sixth century A.D., it had become a generally accepted belief and almost all the royal dynasties that ruled the Tamil country claimed divine origin, especially from Lord Śiva or Lord Vishnu.

The Kuram Plates begin the geneology of the Pallavas with Brahma. While claiming descent from Moon, a Pandya traces the origin of his family to primordial Nature. The Sinnamanur Plates state that the Pandya line started with *Amirta kiraṇa i.e.*, Chandra, *Amritakiraṇānvaya.* The Dalavaypuram Plates begin the line with Brahma who is said to have taken birth in the navel-lotus of Narayana. The Āy chieftains of Venadu also claimed that their family had Narayana as Ādipurusha.

Quite a number of rulers of India claimed that they belonged to either the solar or the lunar race (Sūrya or Chandra *kulas*). This concept was also known to the Tamils from very earlȳ times. The Cholas belonged to the solar race, while the Pandyas claimed lunar origin. Occasionally some of the houses claimed to belong to both the races, since there were frequent intermarriages among them.

Gotra

In addition, Tamil royal families claimed descent from one or the other of the Vedic sages. Thus the Pallavas belonged to the Bharadvaja *gotra* and their ancestry included Angiras, Brihaspati and Bharadvaja. The Pandyas belonged to the Ātreya *gotra*, the Cholas to the Kaśyapa and the Western Gangas to the Kānvayana. The tradition of vedic ancestry is not mentioned in *sangam* literature, but it had taken deep roots long before the sixth century A.D. It was following this tradition that the rulers added the kshatriya honorific *Varman*, to their names. This is another trait not noticed in the early *sangam* period. But the Pallavas, who appear in the Tamil land by the end of the third century, mention both these traditions in their charters. Their earliest charter assigned to the third century A.D., the Hirahadagalli Plates, call them Bharadvajas. Likewise, the Pandyas too bore the suffix *Varma.* The Pandyas of the post-*sangam* age, about whom we have records, added always *Varman* to their names.

Legends

By the sixth century the Hindu *itihāsas* and *purānas* and Buddhist *jataka* tales had gained full currency into Tamil land and left their impact on the ruling clans of the Tamils. Even in the *sangam* age, we find this to a small extent, for the Cheras claimed to have participated in the Mahābhārata war. From the sixth century, the rulers began claiming the heroes of that epic as their progenitors. The Pallavas claimed Drona and Asvatthama, the latter being the pregenitior of the *Pallavakula.* Though the early Pallava charters do not mention this fact, a copper plate of Paramesvaravarman I, issued in the seventh century, makes particular mention of it.

The Pallava charters issued subsequently mention invariably the Asvatthama lineage of the Pallavas. Pururavas and Nahusha are included in the Pandya ancestral list. It is categorically mentioned that the Pandavas destroyed Kurus (or Dhuryodhana) thus claiming Pandava lineage as well. The Chola family was identified with the Ikshvakus, Harischandra, Bhagiratha, Dilipa, Raghu, and Rama figur-

ing as Cholas. Another pan-Indian ruler was Mandhata who is also mentioned as a Chola. The story of Śibi who gave his flesh to save a dove, often mentioned in the Buddhist *Jatakas*, is also included in the Chola geneology. The Āys of Venadu, in south Tamil Nadu, near Travancore, who call themselves *Veḷirs*, claim to have born in a Vedic sacrifice and seem to have migrated from north India, for they call themselves *Vrishnis* and *Yadavas.* Lord Krishna was their legendary hero. This is mentioned in their charters of the eighth century. Another branch of chieftains called Banas claimed descent from Mahabali Chakravarti. All this clearly indicates the full emergence of puranic culture from about the fifth century A.D.

In addition to these puranic legends, some of the Buddhist *jatakas* influenced the making of the genealogies of the Tamil rulers in the seventh and eighth centuries. Thus both the Cholas and the Pandyas claim that one of their ancestors shared the seat of Indra, a legend common in the *Jātaka* tales.

A few legends of local origin are also reflected in the royal pedigrees. One of these relates to Manunitti Chola. His son accidentally killed a calf, his chariot running over it. The mother cow went to the palace and sounded the bell of justice. The king in punishment, ran his own chariot over his son.

Sanskritization

While in the *Sangam* age, the Tamil kings bore Tamil names like Senguttuvan, Killi, Neduncheliyan, etc., from about the sixth century, all the rulers, irrespective of their lineage, bore Sanskrit *Abhisheka nāmas* (names assumed during the coronation). Thus the Pandya names read Jayantavarman, Arikeśari, Srīmāra, Srīvallabha, Jaṭila Parāntaka. Viranaryana, Rajasimha, Sundara, Vira, Vikrama, Kulaśekhara, etc. The Chola names include Vijayalaya, Āditya, Parantaka, Rajaditya, Arinjaya, Sundara, Uttama, Rajaraja, Rajendra, Rajadhiraja, Kulottunga and Vikrama. Simha, Simhavishnu Mahendra, Narasimha, Parameśvara, Rajasimha, Nandi, Danti Nripatunga, Aparajita are well-known Pallava names.

Beginning from the Christian era, the succeeding centuries witnessed a rapid increase in the power and authority of the rulers as more and more areas were brought under their direct rule. This resulted in an enormous concentration of power in the hands of the monarchs. The distance between the ruler and the ruled widened and a middle agency developed. From about the ninth century the term *deva* is attached to the name of the king, such as Nripatungadeva Parantakadeva, Rajarajadeva. The names of the Imperial Cholas invariably include this term.

Chakravarti

Frequent references to the royal *Chakra* in the *Sangam* age clearly suggest that the concept of *Chakravartin* was known to the early Tamils. This concept was enlarged in the medieval period when the rulers, particularly the Cholas and following them the Pandyas, assumed the title, *Tribhuvanachakravarti*—the emperor of the three worlds.

The Pallavas of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries were called *Dharmamahārajādhirājas*. From the seventh century a number of Tamil rulers were called *Adhirājas*. Thus the Pallava ruler, Mahendravarman and Simhavishnu are called Mahendra Potrādhirājan and Singhavinna Potrādhirājan respectively in Mamallapuram epigraphs. A copper plate charter of the eighth century records, that a number of *Adhirājas* of the Tamil country were uprooted by an invading clan called the Kalabhras. The Pandya king Avanichuḷamaṇi (seventh century) is called Adhirāja in the Velvikkudi grant.

The titles *Mahārāja* and *Sārvabhauma*, were applied to the Pallavas and the Pandyas. A significant Tamil title of the Pallavas and the early Cholas is *Permanadi*; *Peruman* means great, respected personality, Lord or *Deva; aḍi*, *i.e.*, *pāda*. The term seems to signify *Devapāda* or *Sripāda*. The Kerala rulers of the medieval period were addressed as *Tiruvaḍi* (Skt *Srīpāda*.)

Another Tamil title which was often borne by medieval monarchs was *Konerinmai Koṇḍān* (unrivalled ruler). With the advent

of Vijayanagara rule in the 14th century a further change is noticed. The rulers called themselves *Devarājas* or *Deva mahārājas, Chatus-samudrādhiptis and Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras* like Krishnadevamaharaya.

Abhishekanāma

The rulers, while ascending the throne, assumed significant titles, alternately. Thus the Cheras of the *sangam* age assumed the title *Vānavaranban* and *Imayavaramban.* The Pandya titles were *Jaṭilavarman* and *Māravarman* and those of the Cholas *Parakesari* and *Rājakesari.* The Pallavas did not follow this practice, but prefixed the term *ko-vijaya* to their names. Assuming titles alternately seems to have been a Tamil tradition.

A number of epigraphs throw light on the ideals and practice of Tamil medieval rulers. Through virtue and prowess, learning, kindness towards their subjects, respect towards elders and the twice born and piety, they aimed at acquiring the reputation of *Rājarishis* of yore. That these were their goals is reflected in a number of Pallava grants.

Prajāparipālana

The kings were conscious of their responsibilities towards their subjects and in their epigraphs never failed to mention their love and affection towards them. The Pallavas likened their love for their subjects to parental affection. At their coronation they took a vow to protect their subjects in accordance with *Dharma*, which they called their *Satyavrata.* The Pandya rulers likewise called themselves the very refuge, *śaraṇyas*, of the people. A Chola monarch mentions that he was a father to the fatherless, a mother to the motherless and a child to the childless. The Cholas also state that it was their aim to remove poverty, hunger and disease and provide shelter and just enjoyment to all their subjects. The intention of the ruler is to see that his subjects enjoy all the pleasures of life, like the mythical land of Uttarakuru, states one of the Chola *praśastis.* The Chola's aim was to safeguard individual liberty and happiness so that each citizen felt that he had a full, independent and happy life.

This awareness among the rulers of the need to uphold individual liberty and happiness is a shining example of Tamil monarchy in the olden days.

Scholarship

Many of the Tamil rulers were highly learned and were authors of literary works. The Pallava ruler, Mahendra I (seventh century) was an outstanding author. He wrote in Sanskrit two farces, *Mattavilāsaprahasana*, and the *Bhagavad ajjukiya*; he is said to have invented a number of musical notations and written a work on Sanskrit prosody. His love of logic is reflected in his titles *Anumāna* and *Upamāna*.

One of his illustrious successors, Rajasimha, another great scholar, is said to have mastered many sciences like *aśvasāstra*, *gaja-sāstra* and music. He mastered the various branches of *Śaiva Siddhānta* and got himself cleansed of sins.

A Pandya ruler of the eighth century A.D. is called *Paṇḍitavat-sala*. A descendent of the same ruler in the 13th century is praised as a master of *Arya* (Sanskrit) and Tamil literature. Vira Pandya of the 13th century claims to have attained a high degree of proficiency in Tamil music, poetry and dance, the purānas, *Pātanjala sūtra* and the *Nītisāstras*.

Besides being scholars themselves, the kings of Tamil Nadu were great patrons of letters. Eminent poets adorned their courts.

Manudharma

Manu's code of law was guiding principle in the administration of the kingdom and all the rulers endeavoured their best to follow it. The Pallavas, the Pandyas and the Cholas invariably mention that they followed Manu's *dharma*. Parantaka Nedunjadayan, a Pandya of the eighth century, followed the *Manudharmesita mārga*. Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pandya, in his *praśastis*, announces that he enforced Manu's code strictly. A number of Chola *praśastis* bear eloquent testimony to the way in which Manu *dharma* was

administered in their kingdom. Some Chola *praśastis* make a pointed reference to the fact that they fixed one-sixth of the produce as royal revenue as prescribed by Manu. It is held by some scholars that the famous ethical work in Tamil, *Tirukkuraḷ*, draws its inspiration mainly from Manu *dharma*. Though this claim is disputed by some other scholars, it is a fact that Manu's *dharma* was the sole guide of Tamil polity, as it is invariably mentioned by the kings in their *praśastis*.

Another point of interest that is mentioned repeatealy from about the sixth century is the evil effects of *Kali* and the efforts of the monarchs to efface them. The Pandyas and, following them, the Cholas repeat this achievement.

Vedic Sacrifices

In the early literary period of the first-second century A.D., the Tamil rulers were great performers of Vedic sacrifices. There is not a single great ruler who did not perform one. Thus Karikala Chola, Pandya Nedunjeliyan, and Cheran Senguttuvan, the most celebrated kings of the *sangam* age, were praised for their vedic sacrifices. One of the Pandyas, Mudukudumi Peruvaluti, performed a number of them and earned the title, the Pandya of many *Yāgaśālas* (*Pal yāgaśālai*). Perunarkilli Chola performed the *Rājasūya* and was called by that name.

The fact that the literature of the *sangam* age refers more to vedic sacrifices than to temples is a pointer to the popularity of the vedic cults among the *sangam* Tamils.

In the sixth and seventh centuries a marked change is witnessed as a result of the *Bhakti* movement spearheaded by the Śaivite and Vaishnavite saints. A large number of temples to Śiva and Vishnu came to be built and the emphasis gradually shifted towards temple worship in preference to vedic sacrifices. Yet these sacrifices continued to be popular.

The early Pallavas claimed exalted purity because they performed innumerable vedic sacrifices, *aneka aśvamedāvabhṛita pavitrī kṛita*

vapusham. They were also performers of *Somayāga*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, *Tulābhāra*, etc. An early Pallava ruler, Sivaskandavarman, offered *Agnishṭoma*, *Aśvamedha* and *Vājapeya* sacrifices. One of the early Pandyas refers to the thousand *kratus* (sacrifices) performed by his ancestors. Another of the same family is said to have offered *homa* in the sacrificial altar both morning and evening. Among the Cholas, Rajadhiraja I, in the 11th century performed a horse sacrifice. *Hiraṇyagarbha*, *Tulābhāra*, and *Bhahusuvarṇa* are other sacrifices that were very popular during this period.

However, from about the eighth century, temple building and endowing land and wealth for worship became universal and we hear less and less about vedic sacrifices. The later Pallavas and Cholas were great temple buildrs. Monumental temples come to be built during this period, and with enormous wealth placed at their disposal, the temples became centres of activity for society.

Daily Life

Form inscriptions and literature we are able to gain a glimpse into the life of the rulers. The father gave the name to the new born child, usually the name of its grandfather on the paternal or the maternal side. In some cases father and son bore the same name. When the ruler was a subordinate, the overlord's name was also given to the child.

At the appropriate age, the prince was invested with the śacred thread and initiated into the study of the Vedas, *dharma sāstras* and *kshatra vidyās* like horse-riding, elephant-riding, and training in weapons.

When the prince attained a certain age, an investiture ceremony was performed and thereafter he was called *yuvamahārāja*. The title *Yuvarāja* was conferred not only on the heir-apparent but also on all the princes when they attained a certain age.

Polygamy was not only accepted in the royal family but actively encouraged for political considerations. Girls of royal families or chieftains were preferred and all such married girls were given the

status of queens, though one amomg them was called the *agramahishī*, the chief queen. It was not uncommon among kings to have extra marital connections with some courtesans, and such women were called *bhogis*.

The succession was mainly patriarchal; the son of the chief queen ascending the throne. But this was not always the case, for the ablest among the sons occasionally secured the kingdom.

Usually the Crown Prince, *Yuvarāja* participated in the administration as a probationer. He also proved his worth in wars, especially by leading an army against opponents. Most of the Imperial Chola rulers won decisive victories on their opponents while they were still crown princes.

Coronation

The coronation of the king was done with great pomp and show. Vedic rites as enunciated in *Brāhmanas* were performed during this ceremony. Describing the coronation of Kulottunga Chola, his court poet Jayankondar, states that Kulottunga ascended the throne to the accompaniment of Vedic chants and was crowned by Brahmins. Sacred water brought from auspicious rivers were poured over the crowned head to the accompaniment of Vedic *mantras*. Then the king was presented with royal insignias, such as white umbrella, sword, flag, drum, sceptre, etc. A copper plate charter states that one of the Pandyas was crowned by Agastya, their *Purohita*. Another copper plate inscription of the same dynasty mentions that their ancestors were crowned according to *Atharva* vedic rites.

While ascending the throne the prince was givan a new name, known as *abhisheka nāma*. Inscriptions specifically mention such new names adopted by rulers.

While, before the sixth century A.D., the vanquished was allowed to rule after paying tribute, later on conquered territories were annexed to the imerial kingdom. The kings appointed their sons and other near relatives as governors of such conquered territories, invest-

ing them with regal titles and authority. Thus the kingdom came to be ruled by the *Kulasanga* with one as its head. This system was not popular among the Pallavas, but it was widely followed by the Cholas and the Pandyas.

Joint Rule

When the ruler become old or considered that the active help of his son would strengthen his hand, he chose his successor who was allowed to issue royal orders. Thus a form of joint rule was recognised among south Indian dynasties. The rulers started counting their regnal years from the date of taking over the reins of the Government. In most cases, the regnal years were mentioned. In some cases the Śaka, Kali, or local eras were also mentioned in the royal orders.

Daily Life

We have a few references in literature of the period to the daily life of the king. He got up quite early in the morning to the accompaniment of music and the sounding of conch and drums. After attending to daily routine, he took bath, referred to as *tirumanjanam* or *tirthābhisheka*. Special musical instruments played on while the king was taking bath. Separate pavilions called *tirumanjanasālais* were available in the royal palaces for baths. Then the king wore a yellow silken cloth; received tender *dharbha* grass from the hands of Brahmins, wore it is a *rakshā* and then offered oblations to *devas*, *rishis* and *pitrs*. Then looking at the mirror he besmeared *vibhuti* over his forehead. Then he offered *pūja* to his *Ishṭadevata* in a royal temple. Changing his yellow silk into white silk dhoti, he then adorned himself with ornaments and the crown.

According to Tamil traditions, the king spent the day in administration, a part of the evening in witnessing music and dance and the night in important consultations with his administrators.

THE QUEENS

At the coronation the queens were also annointed and crowned with the ruler. In all probability they were given new names. They

are mostly mentioned by their real names upto about the 8th century but after wards we find their royal titles mentioned in the epigraphs. Till about the 10th century, the queens were called by various titles and often by their family names viz. Kāḍavanamahadevi, Cholamahadevi, or Cheramadevi, Pandimādevi etc. When the Cholas were at the height of their power, the queens were given a particular title in Tamil as "Lady of the Universe", Ulagamuḻuḍaiyāḷ, a Tamil equivalent of Loka-mahadevi. Other variations of the title are Bhuvanmuḻuḍumudaiyāḷ (Bhuvanamādevi), Dharaṇimuḻudumuḍaiyāḷ (Dharanimādevi), Avani muḻudumuḍaiyāḷ and also Tribhuvanamuḻuḍaiyāl. The later *Pandyas* who succeeded the Imperial Cholas followed suit in not only mentioning their names in their *praśastis*, but also calling their queens as Tribhuvamadevi, etc.

Rights and Previleges

With the advent of Rajaraja the Great (10th cent A.D.) a new trend is noticed in the issue of royal grants. This imperial monarch introduced long *praśastis* detailing his attainments in various fields, especially his conquests. This was continued by his successors who further elaborated the *praśastis*. Thus from the middle of the 11th century the royal pedigrees included the names of the queens who shared the throne with the rulers. The *praśastis* of the 12th century Cholas are of great interest since they detail the rights, privileges and powers wielded by the queens. The queen inherited all the royal prerogatives of her husband as a matter of right, called the rights of *abhisheka*. Among such prerogatives the right to rule is mentioned as one. This illustrates the growing influence of the queen in the royal court. Some of the Chola records mention separate secretariat staff for the queens. Queens participated in public auctions, possessed property in their own names, purchased and gifted such properties, issued orders to their own secretariat staff to supervise their endowments and even signed the documents themselves.

The staff of Parantakan Kundavai, the elder sister of Rajaraja, consisted of an *adhikāri*, an accountant and a writer. In Tiruvaiyaru,

near Thanjavur, an order issued by queen Lokamadevi, the chief queen of Rajaraja I, is recorded. Among the staff of the queens women officers shared equal powers with men in executing their commands.

In Vedic *yagñas* and *yāgas* performed by men the queens were the rightful partners and were called *Veḷvikkiḻati* (*Yagñapatnis*). There are references to queens participating in *tulābhāra* ceremonies performed by the Pallavas, Cholas and the Pandyas. The gold used in such sacrifices was gifted to the temples for performing worship or making other provisions.

VELIRS

Besides the three crowned rulers of the Tamil country there were a number of ancient families of chieftains called Veḷirs who were ruling small territories independently or as subordinates. There are differences of opinion about the origin of the word, Veḷir but the possibilities are that it denotes "a master of the land." Undoubtedly quite a number of these families were of indigenous leadership. They were great patrons of poets and were known for their valour and generosity. A few Veḷir families seem to have migrated from the north. Even in the *Sangam* age, it was held that Veḷirs were born of a *Yāga Kuṇḍa* of a northern sage and migrated to southern India from Dvaraka in the north.

Though a number of these minor families were liquidated before the sixth century A.D., a few continued with some semblance of power till the end of the 13th century. The Āys of Venadu ruling near Kanyakumari were one such family. They were called Yadavas, or Vrshnis and held Krishna as their family hero. In their copper plates of the eigth century, the pay glowing tributes to Nandagopa and Yasoda.

Another such family was that of Irukkuvel, ruling in the Pudukkottai region. In the *Sangam* age itself, a member of this family was considered the 49th descendent of a ruler from Dvaraka. The Irukkuvels continued to be powerful upto the end of the 13th century and were closely allied with the Imperial Cholas with whom they had intimate matrimonial alliances. They too were called Yadavas.

Medieval literature gives the number of Veḷir families as eighteen. This number is obviously derived from such conventional expressions as 18 days of the Mahābhārata war, 18th chapters of the *Gita*, the 18 *puraṇas*, the 18 *desas* and 18 *gaṇas*. We have no specific list of these 18 families of Veḷirs. However, during the medieval period, only a few families of this ancient Veḷirs were in the limelight.

MINOR CHIEFTAINS

There were other families of minor chieftains who were also active during that period. One such family was the Atiya line, ruling with Tagadur (modern Dharmapuri) as their capital. Identified with the Satyaputras of the Aśokan Edicts, they are said to have originally belonged to the Chera family.

Another family that ruled a part of northern Tamil Nadu was the Banas, claiming descent from Mahabali Chakravarti of Puranic fame. They were called Perumbanadiyarasar (Brihad Bāna Adhirajas) or Mahabali Banaraja. They held chieftaincy under the Pallavas and later under the Cholas. Adjoining their territory was the chieftaincy of the Tamil Gangas of the *Kānvāyanagotra*, whose intimate connection with the Gangetic velley is often repeated in inscriptions. They are said to be a branch of Kongani rulers, often called the Western Gangas by historians.

Between the sixth and the eigth centuries, the chieftains held fairly semi-independent rulership, though they formally acknowledged the suzeranity of their overlords, the Pallavas or the Pandyas. Though they were chieftains, they were conferred the title of *Adhirāja*. With the advent of the Cholas, however, they were reduced to absolute submission, often holding posts of commanders under them.

A new trend is witnessed from about the 10th century among the chieftains. They claimed connections with the famous centres of north India such as Chedi, Vatsa, Kalinga, Magada, Virata, and Ayodhya. Thus we find Chedirayas, Vatsarajas, Kalingarajas, Magadarajas, Viratarajas, Nishadharaja, Ayodhirajas, and Gangarajas, figuring as chieftains in Tamil inscriptions. Though it is possible

that some of them were migrants from the north, others might have assumed such titles due to the popularity of these regions in the larger Indian context. This new trend almost overshadows the traditional families of the Veḷirs.

The advent of Vijayanagara rule in the 14th century swept away all these chieftaincies, both the Veḷirs of the *Sangam* age and those that came up during the medieval period; the Vijayanagara rulers being Kannada-Telugu speakers, appointed their own relatives and commanders to govern their territories.

WARRIOR CLASS

We shall do well to study the rest of society under the fourfold *varṇa* divisions as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaiśya and the fourth caste. It is not that the period under review had only these four castes No, not at all ; there were innumerable sub-castes, each trying to align itself with one or the other fourfold division. A careful analysis of the reasons for such a high number of sub-castes clearly indicate that the multiplication is not due to the law codes of the ancient Hindus, but mainly due to geographical distribution, economic factors and influence in the royal court.

On account of wealth or influence in the administration, some people claimed a higher status in caste heirarchy than the unfortunate brethren of the same caste. Often titles and wealth conferred by the rulers on some in honour of their distinguished services to the state also led to the establishment of new castes.

Even as early as the *Sangam* age, these tendencies have taken deep roots and were gradually enveloping whole society. But instances are not wanting where some groups, native to the region tried to retain their individuality. As an instance we may cite *Eyinar* also called *Kunravar* who were native to the soil, following their own tribal organisations, customs and beliefs. This group was called *Vettuvar* (hunters) *Kunravar* (hill tribes) or Maravars, which show that they were essentially a food-gathering tribes. Their main occupation was hunting, cattle-lifting and robbing people passing through forests or highways. The common people, particularly

businessmen were their targets of attack. As they were not obeying the established civilised law of the country, they were called *Maravars* in some instances, as opposed to *Aravars*.

A graphic discription of a *Marava* chieftain in the story of Kannappar is found in a Tamil work of the 12th century. He was a hunter chieftain, who later became a great devotee of Śiva. The depiction of the hunters shows that they followed their own way of worship in which the participation of a Brahmin priest had no place. An elderly woman of the same caste called *Śālini* was consulted for all important functions she exhorted them to offer *bali* to the presiding deity of the forest. The responsibility of doing the worship was also left in her hands. Two gods were specially worshipped by them. One was Velan, identified with Muruga (Subrhamanya) who was propitiated for progeny. The other was Korravai (Durga). The description of Korravai in the *Śilappadhikāram* clearly indicates that, though Aryan laws and customs are not patently visible, some of the Aryan concepts influenced the their was of life. The description of Durga worshipped by the Eyinars shows the highest philosophical expressions of the Sakta cult, and at the same time retaining their primitive way of worship. The story of Kannappan itself is a demonstration of the complete assimilation of Aryan ideas by these hunter tribes.

But as time rolled on a considerable section of these food-gathering tribes, was slowly subjugated both by force and persuasions to accept the authority of the country. It must be admitted that, as they were originally blood-thirsty hunters. they were naturally inclined to serve as warriors and protectors of the land when they accepted the authority of law and thus provided, the cream of the states's army.

The gradual civilising movement of these tribes was accomplished by the Pallavas in the north and the Pandyas in the south. Once tamed, their services could be utilised to the best advantage of the State by making them protectors of smaller or larger administrative units, depending upon individual capacity. No doubt they were the mainstay in times of wars. Yet a small group like some of

the *Koravas* refused to be cowed down and went on their own way of highway robbery and hunting.

Army

We have innumerable references to the role of the army and its individual components.

The army consisted of a number of divisions like the elephent corps (*Kunjaramallar*), the cavalry, the infantry, the bowmen, the swordsmen and other divisions. They were generally named after the titles of the ruler. More than thirty regiments named after Rajaraja are known. Sometimes regiments were distinguished by territorial names like *Pāṇḍippaḍai*. Besides, there were special regiments who were ever ready to defend the king and his cause with their lives when occasion arose.

In the Pallava period soldiers were called *Bhatas* and sometimes *Bhrityas*. The army itself was called *Tana* (*Sthāna*) or *Senāmukha*. The commander of the army was called *Senāpati*, *Mahāsāmanta*, *tanaittalaiva*, or *dandanāyaka*.

The special regiments which stood by the king on all occasions were called *Velaikkārar* by the Cholas. A similar regiment under the Pandyas of a later period were called *āpattudavigaḷ*.

A bifurcation of the army into right hand and left hand (*Valangai* and *Iḍangai*) divisions was effected during the Chola regime, which had its repercussions in later periods. In most cases the select army comprised of the right hand division, though references to the left-hand division were not unknown. All the regiments mentioned in the Thanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I, were of the right-hand divisions, while a left-hand division is mentioned in an inscription of Vijayabahu of Sri Lanka.

Nothing is known about the origin of this peculiar system and we have no clue to determine its varying functions. This division led in course of time to divisions among castes, some calling themselves right hand and the others left hand castes. Among one and the same castes there were left- and right-hand factions, the latter claiming

a higher status. The division of castes into right-hand and left-hand sections was clearly a prerogative of the ruler. In the Vijayanagara period we have pointed references to the issue of royal orders creating right- and left-hand castes. It is not known whether this system originated from the concept of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* divisions of the Hindu law givers.

It is possible that the king kept the fighters to his right and those like smiths, cooks, etc., who were to provide the soldiers with other needs in the war front to his left. This probably gave rise to this naming. The positioning of the army is called in Tamil literature *Kai Vahuttal.* As the soldiers commanded greater attention and respect, it came to pass that they belonged to a higher caste.

These right-hand and left-hand castes were given certain privileges, like carrying their own standards, blowing conches, beating drums, etc., during their communal processions. In the Vijayanagara period the number of castes in each division is said to be ninety-six. There were frequent skirmishes between these two factions in later periods, which continued till very recent times.

It is seen that the army was well-disciplined and commanded by those whose prowess was tested. The Cholas maintained the best army and their naval power was unrivalled in the history of India. The navy of Rajendra Chola I crossed the Bay of Bengal and conquered south Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, Java and the Nicobar Islands. It is also of interest to mention that the ablest army of Rajendra marched right across Kalinga, conquered the rulers of Dakishinalata, Uttralata, Vangaladesa and Dandabhukti, a feat never achieved before or after by any south Indian ruler. Rajendra himself marched upto Godavari to receive his returning victorious army bringing with it the holy waters of the Ganga.

The army had a skilled band of musicians and drummers akin to our modern military bands. Rajaraja's epigraphs record the transfer of a number of men from his military band to the Great Temple of Thanjavur.

There are references in literature of the period to professionals who gave military training to youngsters and in return were provided with land and other property.

Besides taking part in war the army took up to social service viz. looking after the endowments of the temples, etc. This is recorded in inscriptions. In fact, we learn of the part taken by the forces of the king in the civil life of the country more than the details of their military life and organisations.

The kings honoured their able commanders by conferring on them titles, gifts of villages or territory and certain privileges. Aditya Chola conferred the title *Sembiyan Tamiḻaveḷ* on a certain Vikki Annan, who distinguished himself in wars. He was also given the privileges of palace *āsana chauri*, elephants, etc. We have mentioned earlier that the conferring such titles led to multiplication of castes. A number of these communities called themselves Vanniyakula Kshatriyas. Another such title which later was considered a separate caste was *Gavuḍa*, *Kavuṇḍa* or *Grāmeyaka* of the sanskrit epigraphs. As owners of territories, they took in course of time to agriculture in peace time.

CULTIVATORS

Agriculturists who formed the mainstay of society were highly respected. They were called Vellalars or Karalas. According to some scholars, Velala originally denoted those who utilised the flood waters of rivers for irrigation. But it is likely that it stands for those who cultivated earth, *Vel i.e.*, earth. We have mentioned earlier that *Veḷirs* were chieftains, a number of their family claiming Yadava lineage. There is a tradition that the Yadavas were degraded Kshatriyas who assumed Vaisya lineage owing to a curse of Yayati. Their tradition accounts for the use of the same terms for chieftains, businessmen, and also cultivators. There are innumerable references in epigraphs to such usage. They were also called *Bhūmi-putras* (*maṇmagaḷ putalvar*) or those who live by the plough.

According to *Nighanṭu*, cultivation, cattle breeding, business, weaving and service to the twice born are listed as their professions.

It is evident that they were free to chose any one of the above professions.

Among the Vellalas, a number of subjects arose, mainly as a result of royal patronage and large land holdings. Thus we have *chettis*, *Sreshtins*, *Nayakas*, *Mudalis*, *Reddis*, *Nattars Konars* and other sub-castes which were originally royal titles.

Both literature and epigraphs pay glowing tributes to their generosity and greatness. They are likened to the mother in their affection and mercy. Agriculture alone is the profession, all the rest its subordinates, says a *Kural*. A work attributed to Kamban states that there is no higher caste than the Vellala. Sekkilar, a 12th century poet, states that the king could wield his sceptre properly only when the agriculturist ploughed the field. Being an agricultural community, the Tamils have rightly given the most prominent position to the Vellalas. On account of poverty, some of them took to causal labour and service to other communities.

Often the position of the sudra, the fourth caste, in our society is misrepresented. Even a causal study of literature and epigraphs will show that a majority of the sudras held highly respectable positions, at times enquiring into the affairs of even the Brahmins.

A number of Vellalas were in the employ of the king. A certain Parantakapalli Velan was a high ranking officer under Pandya Maranjadaiyan in the eighth century A.D. A certain Perungorkon Velan was a royal accountant in the court of Pandya Rajasimha in the ninth century A.D.

More than sixty percent of the high officers were Vellalars in the Chola administration. They were given the honorific title of *Muvendavelan*. A certain Adittan Suryan alias Tennavan Muvendavelan was a favourite of Rajaraja the Great, who appointed him as the chief administrator of the Great temple of Thanjavur. A certain Vidivitankan alias Villavan Muvendavelan was one of the Rajaraja's *Perundaram* (*Mahādhyaksha*).

Besides being royal officers, a number of Vellalas proved to be efficient commanders, particularly under the Cholas. Some of them like Sekkilar served as ministers to the Chola rulers.

Inscriptions, particularly from the time of the Chola rulers, refer to powerful agricultural guilds functioning in various parts of the country. This were called *chitrameḻi periya nāḍus*. Even though the members of this guild lived under different rulers, they retained their well-knit organisation and obeyed its social laws. They had their own religious *praśastis*, giving their aims and achievements. These state that the plough was their god. They had the figure of a plough in their flags. They called themselves *Bhūmidevi putras* and in a number of temples, particularly dedicated to Vishnu, set up the image of Bhumidevi and arranged for her regular worship. They erected a *toraṇa* in the form of a plough in one of the temples.

The administration of the guild was carried on by representatives of these communities. These representatives met as occasion demanded and took decisions on communal charities, disputes and all other matters relating to their life and their decision was binding on all members of the community.

The functioning of agricultural guilds was at its height during the Chola period. Some of the members of these guilds were also traders, particularly in grain.

A few references are available in contemporary literature to the day to day life of the Vellalas. At the appropriate age, the hair removing ceremoney was performed for the Vellala boy. Then on, he was allowed to learn various branches of knowledge. When the Vellala girl attained the age of twleve, she was married. Marriage is most cases was arranged by the parents. It was the custom for the parents of the boy to send some elders to the girl's parents seeking her hand in marriage. Once the marriage was agreed to, an auspicious day acceptable to both the parties was selected by *pundits*. To mark the beginning of the marriage rites, a small quantity of seeds were sown in special vessels. These would have sprouted considerably on the occasion of the marriage. This, called *pālikai*

which seems to be a fertility rite. The most important rite of the marriage was the *Pāṇigrahaṇa i.e.*, the bridegroom taking the hand of the bride.

MERCHANTS

Vanigas or merchants played an important role, in the life of the Tamil people. The earliest Tamil grammar, *Tolkappiyam,* ascribed to the beginning of the Christian era refers to those engaged in trade as Vaisyas. They were also called *Eṭṭis, Bharatas, Cheṭṭi, Vaṇigas,* etc. Six kinds of pursuits, namely vedic learning, vedic sacrifices, gifts, cultivation, cattle breeding and trade were recognised as their legitimate rights. They are mentioned as differently *Vyāpāri, Vaṇiga,* etc., in epigraphs and were engaged in trade and agriculture. From very early times maritime and inland trade was prominent.

A number of Jaina rock-beds bearing inscriptions, dating back to the second century B.C. have been brought to light from various of Tamil Nadu. They record gifts to Jaina ascetics. A good number of donors of these records were *Vaṇigar,* dealing, in grain, salt, iron, gold, cloth, etc., which illustrates the economic prosperity of the business community even in the pre-Christian era. The literature of the period makes pointed references to their honesty and states that they sold their goods by telling openly their percentage of profits.

Besides references to individual merchants, epigraphs mention merchant guilds from the time of the Pallavas. A few important guilds are mentioned quite frequently. The *Maṇigrāman, Nāṇadeśi, Chitrameḻi, Saṅkarappāḍi,* are such guilds. Tamil merchants travelled to countries across the ocean and maintained active contacts with other lands. The presence of such a Tamil guild in lower Thailand is attested by a Tamil inscription at Takua-pa (Talai Takkolam). The inscription dated in the reign of Pallava Nandivarman records the setting up of some images and digging a pond *Avaninārana,* named after the king by the merchantile guild, *Maṇigrāmam.* Their endowment was placed in the charge of a *Senāmukha.* Evidently the guild *maṇigrāma.,* was accompanied by soldiers to protect their property. The *Maṇigramā* guild continued to be active in the Chola

period is attested by epigraphs from Kodumbalur and Salem, where they are seen endowing charitable rights.

Another powerful autonomous corporation of merchants, whose activities apparently took little or no account of political boundaries, was the *Nānādeśi Tisai Āiyarattu ainūrruvar* group. The term stands for the five hundred of the thousand directions in all countries. This most celebrated guild was well-organised much earlier than ninth century A.D. and had a long record of achievement.

The members of the guild visited many countries in the course of their trade and were respected and given a privileged positions. They received the patronage of the Imperial Cholas, and took an active part in the local administration. Their claim to have visited several countries is attested by two epigraphs. A fragmentary epigraph in Tamil, from Loboe Toewa in Sumatra, dated in the Saka era 1010 (A.D. 1080) indicates their overseas trade. In the 13th century, a Vishnu temple was built at Pagan in Burma, by the Nanadesi guild and gifts were made to it by a merchant from one of the ports of the Malabar coast.

A few interesting details regarding their origin and organisations are available from epigraphs.

"Born of the race of Vasudeva, Kandali, and Kulubhadra, they were favoured by the Goddess Bhagavati, and comprised many sub-divisions. Born to wanderers over many countries, they visited the Chera, Chola, Pandya, Malaya, Magadha, Kosala, Saurastra, Dhamusta, Kurumba, Kamboja, Lata, Banuvara, Nepala, Ekapada, Lambakarna, Stri Rajya, Gholamukha and many other countries, and by land routes and water routes penetrated into the regions of the six continents. Their trade was in superior elephants, well-bred horses, precious stones of all sorts, spices, perfumes and drugs. They sold them wholesale or hawked them about on their shoulders. They often carried their merchantise on the back of asses and buffaloes, adorned with red trappings."

Discussing the agricultural guilds, we have mentioned the *Chitrameḷi* guild. The *Nānādeśi* guild also formed itself into a *Chitrameḷi*

guild, a number of their branches owing allegiance to this great assembly. The mercantile *Chitrameḻi* guild consisted of both agriculturist called *Nāṭṭars*, (*Vishaya*) and other traders called *Nānādeśi Panchasatas*. They were residents of *Paṭṭaṇa*, *Puras*, *Ghaṭikas* and *Dhavālas*. They had the privilege of issuing their *praśastis* in their epigraphs. Their *sāsanas* are called *Tribhuvanāsraya Panchasata vīra sāsanams*. An inscription of Piranmalai makes it clears that they adored Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

The *Nānādeśi* guild often assembled in temple pavilions and agreed to pay a certain amount of their sale proceeds for purposes of endowing special worships. There are a few epigraphs like the Piranmalai inscription which detail the list of commodities traded in and the taxes levied on individual items.

Besides these powerful guilds of *Maṇigrāma* and *Nānādeśi*, local business communities had their own representative assemblies, looking after their business interests. The assembly was called *Nagara* and their selected representatives *Nagarattar*. They lived in separate colonies, which were also called *Nagaras*. They often participated individually and collectively in the village assemblies.

BRAHMINS

The role of Brahmins, in the history and culture of Tamil land cannot be minimised. The Brahmins formed a minor section, though undoubtedly the most intellectual section of the Aryan migrants to the Tamil country. Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, in his inaugural lecture at the Atom Babu Institute had demonstrated the great role played by Sage Agastya in this direction. Sage Agastya was undoubtedly the symbol and pioneer of Indianising the extreme South. The earliest available literature of the South, assigned to the first few centuries of the Christian era, shows clearly the cultural unity of the country. It was in no small measure due to the Brahman sages, who with missionery zeal emulating Agastya, crossed the Vindhyas, carrying this unifying culture. In *Sangam* literature itself, Veda-chanting Brahmins are mentioned as performing sacrifices and pursuing professions as found in other parts of India. Brahmins belonging to various *gotras*

like *Kauṇḍinya*, *Vātūla*, *Kośika Ātreya*, *Kaśyapa*, *Bhāradvāja*, *Maudgalya* and *Kapi*, were well-known in the *sangam* age. They mingled freely with the local people like the other sections of the Aryan people, the Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras and were well-settled in various parts of the Tamil country. With the advent of the Pallavas the number of Brahminical *gotras* is found to be more than thirty-two, a list of which is given below :

1. *Sāndilya*	2. *Bhāradvāja*	3. *Gautama*
4. *Bādarāyana*	5. *Parāsara*	6. *Kaśyapa*
7. *Kānva*	8. *Vātula*	9. *Avishṭa*
10. *Ātreya*	11. *Kausika*	12. *Vatsa*
13. *Vishnuvrutta*	14. *Ratitara*	15. *Maddara*
16. *Bahukutsa*	17. *Kauṇḍinya*	18. *Savarṇi*
19. *Moudgala*	20. *Mastala*	21. *Sānkrityayana*
22. *Kamaka*	23. *Kutsa*	24. *Kapi*
25. *Harita*	26. *Lohita*	27. *Vāsishṭa*
28. *Gargi*	29. *Agnivesya*	30. *Sankarshana*

The Pandya copper plates of the same period, give *Bhārgava* and *Vana gotras* as well.

In the eighth century itself, the adherents of the *Āpastamba*, *Pravachana*, *Vājasaneyi*, *Hiraṇyakesi*, *Bhavishya*, *Chandoga*, *Kālarasya*, *Agnivesya Āsvalayana* and *Baudāyana Sūtras*, sub-sects came into existence much earlier than the sixth century. They may broadly be divided into three groups as Ādi Śaiva Brahmanas, Vaishnava Brahmanas and Veda-reciting Brahmanas. This division is mainly due to the increasing role of the temples in Tamil society. The Śaiva Brahmanas were followers of *Āgamic* codes both in their domestic and temple rites. Among the Vaishnavites, two sub-groups were prevalent. One followed the tenets of he vedic saga *Vikhanasa*, and were called *Vaikhānasa*. Another school which seems to have had a none-

vedic origin but soon assimilated vedic traits was the *Pāncharātra* school, before the 12th century A.D. The Vedic school of the *Vaikhānasa*, was mainly followed all over Tamil Nadu before the 12th century A.D. All inscriptions refer only to the *Vaikhānasa* form of worship in Vishnu temples. Though the study of the *Pāncharātra* system is mentioned in 11th century records the *vaikhānasa* continued to be the main sect. But towards the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century the great Vaishnava teacher, Ramanuja converted a number of temples to the *Pāncharātra* system. Between the two schools, the *Vaikhānasa* was a tolerant school, while the *Pāncharātra* sect followed a more militant path.

The third group of Brahmins was the Veda-chanting sect who later came to be called *Smārtas*. They followed the *advaita* school of *Acharya* Sankara.

During the earlier period of the Pallava-Pandya rule, we find a number of royal charters gifting villages to one or more Brahmin families settling them there and apportioning the produce to each family. Such gifts to a single person, on account of his attainments, was called *Ekabhoga Brahmadeya* and to a number of families was simply called *Brahmadeyas*. Copper plate charters of this period also record gifts of land or villages to Brahmanas as their own property on the occasions of solar or lunar eclipses.

With the advent of the Cholas, a very great number of Brahmin families were settled by the kings or queens as an adjunct of the temples. Such colonies were called *Chaturvedimangalams*. In most cases, the *Chaturvedimangalams* were named after the kings or queens and bear ample testimony to the personal interest of the royal families in active Brahmanical colonisation. The Pallavas brought a considerable number of Brahmin families from the Kannada-Telugu region. The Cholas induced a still larger number of Brahmin families, often mentioned in thousands, to migrate to the Tamil land from various parts of India, like Kashmir, Aryadesa, Madhyadesa, Karvan and Western India, in Lata, and Gaudadesa in the east. This cultural migration reached its zenith in the 11th and 12th centuries A.D.

Besides encouraging the Brahmins to settle in their country, the kings took personal interest in the organisation of their educational institutions called *ghaṭikas*, *vidyāsthanas* or *śālas*, some of which like the *ghaṭika* of Kanchi assumed international repute. A *śāla* in the extreme south, near Trivandrum, was functioning effectively in the eighth century A.D., and we find a local ruler, Karuanan Tadakkan, establishing a similar *śāla* at another place named after his title *Parthivasekhara*. The charter mentioning the establishment of this *śāla* is interesting in many ways as it refers to the subjects taught in the *śālas*, the number of students admitted, the mode of admission, the method of study and the rights and duties of the students, etc., which throw valuable light on the constitution and functioning of these educational institutions.

Besides the Pallava epigraphs, considerable number of Chola inscriptions refer to such institutions and the subjects of study.

Brahmins served in various capacities at the royal court. A number of Brahmins served as ministers to the kings and were honoured by the kings with such titles as *Brahmādhirājas*. A certain Brahmadirajan served as a *mukyamantri* of the Pallava ruler, Nandivarman. A certain Haricharana Kamalasekharan was *Narendra mantri* to the Pandya ruler Parantaka Viranarayana. A certain Ariruddha Brahmadhiraya was the celebrated *Amātya* of a Chola ruler.

On account of their mastery of the *Dharmasāstras*, Brahmins were selected by the rulers to advise them on matters of law and such *adhikāris* were called *Dharmādyaksha* or *Dharmopadeshta*. References are not wanting in epigraphs to the Brahmin *Rājagurus* of the Pandyas and Imperial Cholas.

Like Dronacharya of the *Mahabharata*, a considerable number of Brahmins, distinguished themselves in warfare and served under the Pandyas and Cholas as *mahāsāmantādhipati* or *Senāpatis*. The unparalled success of the Imperial Cholas was in no small measure to these Brahmin Commanders. Almost all the Chola rulers of the medieval period had Brahmin *senāpatis*. The *Senapati* of Rajaraja

the Great, was a certain Krishnan Raman alias Mummudichola Brahma Marayan. Other posts held by the Brahmins were administrative offices and the posts of village accountants.

The Brahmins as a community lived in colonies and had one of the most perfected systems of self-government by electing their own assemblies. Each Brahmin village was divided into wards depending on its size, and each ward elected its own representative to its assembly. The assemblies of the Brahmin settlements were called *Sabhās*, *Mūla Parishads*, *Gaṇas*, etc.; the term *Sabha* being the commonest. The assemblies were divided into sub-committees to look after the various functions of the village. They had a community hall *sabhāmaṇḍapa* in which they met and transacted their business. We have a historic record coming from Uttiramerur (near Madras) which dates to the tenth century A.D. The record is one of the most outstanding records of India. It gives the qualifications and disqualifications of the members of the assembly, the method of elections, the constitution of sub-committees, etc. Tamil land was a land of democracy wherein such highly organised village assemblies functioned effectively from early periods to the end of 16th century A.D.

A great body of literature exists which throws valuable light on the day to day life of the Brahmins. There is no need to go into these details since it is seen that they followed the tenets of their respective *sūtras*.

ARTISANS

The artisans and craftsmen played their own role in the development of society. Goldsmiths, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, architects, sculptors, carpenters and jewel-setters are some of the artisans who had a significant place in society and are referred to in epigraphs and literature. All of them belonged to the common category of *Kammālas*, (*Karmakāra* in Skt). Ancient *Nigaṇṭus* call them *Śilpins*, *Tvashṭa*, *Śthapati*, *Yavanas*, *Akkaśāliyas* and *Chitrakāras*.

Two significant words, *Yavanar* and *Pānchalas* applied to them, are interesting. It is well-known that *Yavana* craftsmen have left

their mark on the artistic traditions of India. That the *yavanas* were held in very high esteem for their artistic achievements, is proved by *Avantisundari Katha*, a work of the eight century A.D. which, referring to Lalitalaya, an Indian "*śilpin*" states that he surpassed even the *Yavanas* in artistic skill, '*Yavananapyatesayanena*'.

The second term *Pānchalas*, also is significant. Even in modern times, the Kammalas in their traditional stories, trace their origin to the Panchala region Evidently, a group, if not all, had migrated to the south from the Panchala region.

Like the agricultural and mercantile guilds, the craftsman had their own guild which looked after their communal interests. The guild had its own *praśasti* in which they claim *Uttarapati* as their original home. They had the figure of *makara* in their flag. Their traditional accounts and inscriptions point to these mixed origin, and they were evidently progenies of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages.

The Hindu law givers have reserved various arts and crafts to the *Sankirṇjātis*. Till very recent times Kammalas called themselves *Panchavarṇas*.

Of all the *Kammālas*, the goldsmiths were the richest. But the *sthapatis*, the *śilpins* and architects commanded greater respect, as they were *honest* and followed a permanent visible art. The architects were divided traditionally into four classes as *sthapatis*, (superintending architects) stone masons, surveyors and sculptors. In inscriptions they are generally called *Tachcha* or *Mahā Tachcha*.

Innumerable references are found in inscriptions, to them and in some cases the names of builders of great temples are also preserved. We have, thus, the names of the workers at the famous monuments of Mamallapuram. The architect who designed and erected the Great Temple of Thanjavur was Rajaraja Mahatachchan.

Besides the erection of temples, they were employed in inscribing royal charters on copper plates and stones and were honoured with suitable titles and lands. One of the copper plates of the Pandyas mentions a *tachcha* who manufactured weapons for the king.

Some of these artisans were highly accomplished poets. In one case we have an artisan composing a royal *praśasti* of a Pandya.

There is an interesting epigraph of the 12th century A.D. throwing valuable light on their life and profession. A dispute seems to have arisen among the various sections of this community. Brahmins, well-versed in various law codes, assembled in the local village and discussed the dispute. Various law codes were cited by these Brahmins and all their citations are found recorded in this epigraph.

2

FRESH LIGHT ON DRAVIDIAN PEOPLE

The recent find of a bi-lingual coin of a Satavahana ruler in the excavation at Dhulikatta, Karimnagar District, Andhra Pradesh adds a new diamension to the study of Dravidian problem. The coin was found in an excavation by Dr Krishna Shastri of the Andhra Pradesh State Department of Archaeology and is published here with the kind permission of the Director of Archaeology, Andhra Pradesh.

The coin bears on the obverse the portrait-head of the ruler with a Prakrit legend running around it. A part of the coin is damaged and two holes punched on the head side show that the coin was used as a pendant at a later date. However, the legend is clear enough and reads '*Rāno Vasisṭi Putasa Siva Siri Pulamāvisa*', in Brahmi characters of the second century A.D. On the reverse of the coin is a six-arched mountain in the centre topped by a crescent. To the side is another symbol called *vajra*, also topped by a crescent and in between is the sun. Below is a wavy line representing a river. Running around the group of symbols is a legend, reading *Arachanku Vachiṭṭi Ma* (*kanku Siva*) *Thiru Purūmāviku*. The letters are in characters found in early cave inscriptions of Tamil Nadu assignable to 1st-2nd century A.D. It would be clear that the reverse legend is a word to word rendering of the obverse in a southern language; for example *Rano=Arachanku, Vasisṭi putaku=Vachiṭṭi Makanku*; *Siva Sri=Sivathiru, Pūlamāvisa=Purumāviku*. The words *Arachan*, *Makan*, *Thiru* and the doubling of the consonant *ṭṭi* in *Vachiṭṭi* would show that the language on the reverse of this coin is akin to Tamil.

It is the fourth coin of the Satavahana rulers to have come to light bearing a legend in two languages, and were issued by successive

Satavahana rulers, Vasishtiputra Pulamavi, Vasishtiputra Siva Sri Pulamāvi, Vasishtiputra Satakarni and Gotami Putra Yagnasri Satakarni. In the issues of all these rulers, the coins bear on the obverse the name of the ruler in Prakrit and on the reverse in a southern language and script very close to Tamil. The coins were intended for circulation according to historians in the north-western part of the Satavahana empire that is in the Maharashtra and southern part of Saurashtra and Gujarat.

One of the interesting problems in the history of India is the identification of the Dravidian speaking people. It has been demonstrated by Physical Anthropologists, that the word Dravidian does not denote a distinct race, for, an analysis of the early skeletons from various parts of south India shows only a mixed race, so that the term Dravidian could not be used in a racial sense. It is now generally accepted by eminent scholars that the word Dravidian is used only in a linguistic sense referring to a group of spoken languages having common word formations, syntax and grammatical structure distinctly different from the Indo-European group of languages. From the earlier available records, it is evident that the word *Drāiviḍa* is derived from the word Damilica standing for Tamil. When writers refer to Dravidian problem, they take the modern Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam and other minor dialects and speak of the origin and development of the Dravidian language. Telugu and Kannada begin to appear in records and literature only from about 5th-6th centuries A.D. Malayalam appears still later around 9th-10th centuries A.D. So when one speaks of Dravidian language, with reference to the beginning of the Christian era, the question of Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam have to be kept out. But Tamil is found both in records, inscribed on stone walls in and literature from the middle of 2nd century B.C. and it is admittedly the earliest classical language of the Dravidian group. So with reference to a given point of time, particularly the beginning of the Christian era, the only language which could be specifically identified with the Dravidian group is Tamil. As mentioned earlier Tamil and *Drāviḍa* are synonyms.

It has already been mentioned that the successive Satavahana rulers have issued bilingual coins bearing on the obverse, a legend in Prakrit, the language of the Court and on the reverse the legend in Tamil (or may be called *Drāviḍa*); Telugu and Kannada having come into existence at a later date. This was obviously for the benefit of the people speaking the language in the territory. Now this clearly shows that the Dravidian speaking people were spreadout atleast upto the lower Saurashtra and Gujarat region in 2nd century A.D. and from the lower Andhra-Karnataka regions. The motivation for the use of Dravidian language on the reverse of all the Satavahana rulers, clearly shows that the Dravidians formed a considerable section of the society under their rule upto that region. Whether the Dravidian speakers were present in the Surashtra or Gujarat region before the second century B.C. is an important question. But this question cannot be answered by lingustic history, because no indisputable datable written records from that region have survived.

To trace the history of the people who spoke this language, archaeology comes to our aid. It is well-known that the Dravidian speakers are now mainly centred in the southern part of India. Archaeological Excavations have been carried out in many of the ancient burials in southern part of India assignable to 7th-8th century B.C. In these burials a particular type of pottery called Black and-Red ware occurs in profusion. It is a special type of pottery with exterior of the vessel being red in colour and the interior and the rim portion being black. This pottery is clearly different from the pottery used in the Mauryan court, as for in instance, in the court of Aśoka Raja or the immediately preceding period associated with the Aryans.

Quite appropriately the Archaeologists have associated this Black-and-Red ware pottery, with the speakers of Dravidian languages. It is interesting to point out that this Black-and-Red ware pottery is found from the lower Saurashtra, Gujarat region down upto Kanyakumari. This particular pottery continues to be used till atleast 3rd-4th century A.D., is also noted from excavations in various part of southern India. From this it is evident that the speakers of

the Dravidian group of languages, whose presence in Maharashtra, lower Gujarat and Saurashtra region attested by the Satavahana bilingual coinage were also present in the region prior to this period and that their existence in the region could be traced back to 7th-8th century B.C.

The interesting question then would be, whether it would be possible to connect these Black-and-Red ware people (or the Dravidian people) with the Indus Valley people. It is necessary to show that this special type of pottery was also in use in the Indus Valley period. The recent excavation at Lothal, the Black-and-Red ware pottery has been found at the latest phase of the Indus Valley people which shows that the Dravidian people were in contact with the Indus people towards the end of the Indus Civilisation. The question whether the Indus people themselves, towards the end of the mature civilisation switched over to the use of Black-and-Red ware pottery and so were themselves the Dravidian speaking people or the latter came from some other region and got assimilated with the Indus people is yet to be decided.

It is well-known that towards the end of the Indus Civilisation in the Punjab, the Indus people seem to have met an invading group of people identified with the Aryans. Sir Mortimer Wheeler once propounded the theory that the Indus Valley Civilisation was totally exterminated by the invading Aryans. But later he withdrew his suggestion when the existence of Indus Civilisation was proved beyond Mohanjodaro and Harappa regions. But that the Aryans came into contact with the Indus valley people has received general acceptance among scholars. The question again whether the Indus people themselves were the Aryans, is yet to be proved. It is evident that the Indus Valley people came into cantact with the Aryans on the one hand and the Dravidians on the other.

We have shown above three definite points of verifiable facts with reference to the Dravidian problem : (1) The presense of Dravidian speakers in the Maharashtra, lower Saurashtra-Gujarat region is attested by the issues of bilingual coins by successive Satavahana rulers; (2) The Dravidian speakers made use of a special type

of pottery called Black-and-Red ware; and (3) the presense of this pottery in the last phase of Indus Civilisation shows that the Dravidian speakers were in contact with the Indus people, almost at the same period when the Indus people came into contact with the vedic speaking people.

Quite an intellectual dialogue is now going on in the country, regarding the decipherment of Indus script. It is an indisputable fact that a clue to the language of the Indus people lies in the decipherment of the script. The claim on the one hand that the Indus language is Vedic Aryan and on the other that it is Dravidian should be viewed in the above context. A point worthy of note is that the Indus script remained astonishingly constant for nearly one thousand years from about 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C., a rare example in the history of world writing. It neither showed decay or signs of evolution but only suddenly disappeared from the scene and no script worth the name has been recognised from about 1500 B.C. to the rise of Aśoka in 3rd century B.C., for nearly 1200 years. In a sense the Indus people were less prone to innovation or change and that their civilisation shows almost a monotonous uniformity for over one thousand years.

Once Aśoka introduced the scripts, the Brahmi and Karoshthi, and arranged for their propagation with sufficient force and authority, the scripts showed a spirit of dynamism, and changed gradually and evolved, suited to various regions and dialects. The Brahmi script, assuming two different forms even as early as the beginning of the Christian era, found in the coins of Satavahanas within 200 years of its introduction, shows that the Indian society has become more virile, ready to adjust and assimilate new ideas and concepts, placing itself on the right path of progress. The find of this bilingual coin of the Satavahana ruler has opened new lines of enquiry in the study of Dravidian problem.

3

THE FESTIVAL OF THE COSMIC DANCER

Festivals have always been a source of inspiration and joy and have stirred up the religious fervour of the people. From the beginning of the Christian era south India has a recorded history in its *Sangam* classics, wherein graphic descriptions are found of festivals and their role in the life of the people. *Maduraikāñchi* one of the ten idylls of *Pattupāṭṭu*, gives a vivid description of evening festivals when deities were taken out in procession with Śiva heading it. *Tiruvādirai* (*Ārudra*) festival has been assigned a prominent place in south India from very early times.

In *Sangam* literature references are to be found to the *Mārgaḷi* festival (*Margaḷi Nonbu*). Karaikal Ammaiyar, whose date is assigned to the fifth century A.D. is said to have witnessed the great dance of Śiva at Tiruvalangadu. In her *Iraṭṭaimaṇimālai* she speaks of Śiva whose day is *Tiruvādirai* (*Ādirai Nannāḷan*). Tirunavukkarasu, addressing the Lord of Tirukkur tantonrimadam, speaks almost in identical terms as lord of *Ādirai* (*Ādirai nāḷai amarntān*). Tirunavukkarasu was a contemporary of Mahendravarma, the great Pallava king (A.D. 600-630). Tirugñanasambandar was his younger contemporary. He was also a contemporary of Siruttondar, who took a leading part in the Vatapi expedition of Narasimhavarman I. Singing the praise of the Lord of Mylapore, Sambandar gives a list of festivals observed in the temple in which *Tiruvādirai* finds significant mention.

Manikkavachakar is said to have been the Minister of the Pandya King Varaguna and is ascribed to the beginning of the ninth century A.D. While at Tiruvannamalai, worshipping the Lord he noticed young girls getting up early in the morning, collecting their

friends and going to a lotus pond, singing the praise of Śiva. After taking bath, they worshipped Gauri, whose figure they made in sand. This they performed for ten days prior to *Tiruvādirai* in order that the World may have wealth and prosperity and that they may be blessed with lovable husbands. This religious observance is called *Pāvai nonbu*. Tradition avers that Manikkavachakar sang the *Tiruvembāvai* hymns to these girls. These hymns have ever since been held sacred and are sung to this day in the Śaivite temples, particularly during the month of *Margaḻi*. The *Tiruvembāvai* festival is observed ten days prior to *Tiruvādirai*. Thanks to the impetus given to the hymns of *Tiruppāvai* and *Tiruvembāvai* by His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal of Kanchi Kamakothi Pitha these hymns are being sung by devotees, particularly during this season.

That the *Tiruvādirai* festival had a great significance could be gleaned from inscriptions as well. An inscription in the third year of Nandipotaraiyar at Kunnandarkoil, Pudukkottai district refers to a gift of 200 *nāḻi* of rice for feeding a hundred persons on the day of *Tiruvādirai* by Ganavatiman alias Pagaichanda Visayarasan of Vaduvur. The Pallava king mentioned is Nandivarman III, the conqueror of Tellaru battle. He reigned in the ninth century A.D. Another inscription of Kovijaya Nandivikramavarman at Mangadu, in Chingleput district, refers to provision for offerings, etc., on *Tiruvādarai* festival. There are many such inscriptions, referring to provisions, etc., for the *Ādirai* festival bearing testimony to its popularity. *Tiruvādirai* is more important than any other festival to the Tamils for its lord is Nataraja, a concept which is a unique contribution of the Tamils to world thought. Śiva is the master of dance and music and is referred to as such from very early times. He is said to have performed 108 forms of dance as enumerated in Bharata's *Nātya Sāstra*. Śiva's various modes of dances are depicted in the Great temple of Thanjavur and at the entrance of the *gopuras* of Chidambaram. Of these dances, the *talasamsphotita*, *chatura*, *ūrdhava tāṇḍava* and *ananda tāṇḍava* are popular with the artistes of the Tamil country. The *talasamsphotita* was a favourite theme of the Pallava king Rajasimha.

The evening dance, which Śiva is said to perform in the Himalayas, is usually identified with the *chatura tāṇḍava.* This theme, though not very common, is still noticed in early sculptures and bronzes of south India. A beautiful copper image of Nataraja in *chatura tāṇḍava*, without the *apasmāra* under his feet, is now under worship at the Makutesvara Temple of Kodumudi, in Coimbatore District. The *ūrdhva tāṇḍava* mode as represented in Tiruvalangadu is well-known. But above all the *ānanda tāṇḍava*, as depicted at Chidambaram, is the most fascinating and has caught the imagination of all. It is this form which is represented in bronze in all the Śaivite temples of south India. This particular form is not specifically mentioned in the Bharata's *Nātyasāstra.* A figure very nearly resembling this is noticed on the facade of the rock-cut cave at Siyamangalam excavated by Mahendravarman I.

The credit for having invented this mode is usually ascribed to the Cholas. The earliest representation of *ānanda tāṇḍava* could be traced to the time of Parantaka Chola I. The devotion of Rajaraja, the Great to Lord Siva and in particular to Nataraja is well-known. Rajaraja who was called Śivapadasekhara by his people, delighted in calling Nataraja image *Āḍavallān*. He even named the principal weights and measures of his times *āḍavallān*. The *Āḍavallān* of Chidambaram was the family deity of the Imperial Cholas. Almost every king of this line contributed to the building of temple of Tillainayakam. Vikrama Chola and his General, Naralokavira, made very significant contributions. Kulottunga II, erected the thousand-pillared hall, where Sekkilar expounded his *magnum opus*, *Periya Puranam* the great Tamil work on the lives of sixty-three śavite saints. It is in this thousand-pillared hall Lord Nataraja is given a great *Abhiseka* on *Tiruvādirai* day every year. *Āgamas* enjoin that the *abhisheka* for Nataraja during *Tiruvādirai* should be performed at night and that the deity should be taken out in procession before sunrise.

The *Tiruvādirai* festival is observed in all the Śaivite temples. It is the most celebrated festival in Chidambarm, which is reverentially referred to as *Koil* by all Śaivites.

Śiva is the lord of the south (*Tennāḍuḍaiya Śivane Porri*). He is Nataraja, the cosmic dancer, who gave *darśan* to his devotees, Patanjali and Vyaghrapada at Tillai. The Nataraja concept has received the admiration of the whole world—*Tiruvādirai* is the festival of Nataraja of the Tamils.

4

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF KAUMARAM

The worship of Kumāra—Murugan or Subrahmanya—as the Supreme is known as *Kaumāram.* Differing views are expressed on the origin of this cult. According to Tamil tradition, the cult of Muruga is native to the Tamil country, as he is considered the presiding deity of the Tamil language. The worship of Subrahmanya has been commanding great respect in Tamil Nadu from very early times and has become a part of Tamil life. It is in this part of India that worship of this deity is widely prevelant to this day. In northern India, the cult of Kumāra seems to have had its beginnings in the Vedic age. Some scholars trace the origin of this deity to the Indo-Iranian period while others suggest a Mediterranean origin.

During the ages, many stories accumulated relating to the birth of Subrahmanya. There are different accounts in the *epics* and *Purānas*. According to the *Rāmāyana* Subrahmanya, also called Kārtikeya, was the son of Agni and the river Goddess Ganga. The *Mahābhārata* calls him son of Agni and Svāhā, while the *Purānas* describe him as the younger son of Śiva and Parvati, the Primordial parents of the Universe. It is the last mentioned that is widely known and accepted.

"Skanda is blended of aspects of Rig Vedic Apamnapāt, Trita Āpatya, Soma, Agni, Indra, Varuna, Bṛhaspati, and Hiranyagrabha. Skanda is a Rig-vedic divinity affirming the immensity and the variety of Reality" says T.G. Aravamudhan in a learned note on Skanda. (*Trans. Arch. Soc. of S. India*, vol. VII, pp. 129 ff.). In this connection the following needs mention.

According to the Vedas, Soma is the embryo of the waters or their child. Seven sisters as mothers are said to be around the child,

the new born, the *Gandarvas* of the waters. Soma is also spoken of as a youth. The identity of Subrahmanya with the Agni, Soma of the Vedic period has been accepted by other scholars as well. It may be recalled that Rudra is identified with Agni in Vedic hymns. This syncretism probably gave rise to different legends relating to the birth of Skanda, though in reality they point to one and the same source.

Kumāra-Muruga is known by various names like, Skanda, Kārtikeya, Shanmuka, Paḷani Āṇḍi, Subrahmanya and so on. *Sakti* is his special weapon and he is therefore, called *Saktidhara.* In the Tamil country *Vel* (the spear) is considered his weapon and he is called Velon or Velavan. After his birth Kumāra was nourished by the Krittikās and so came to be called Kārtikeya. He is known as Shanmuga or Ārumuga as he is six-headed. As the lord of sacrifices, he is affectionately worshipped as Brahmanyadeva; sacrifice is considered symbolic worship of knowledge and so Subrahmanya is known as the giver of knowledge, worshipped by saints and sages. He is said to have taught the secrets of knowledge to Brahma in which aspect he came to be recognised as Brahmasāsta. In the Tamil country He is also said to have explained the meaning of the the mystic word "*Om*" to his father, Śiva and came to be called *Tagappansvami.* Kumāra is extolled for having destroyed the terrific demon, Sūrapadma, according to Tamil traditions and Tārakāsura, according the Puranic version. The *Sakti*, his weapon, the peacock his mount and the cock (*Kukkuṭa*) his standard are often praised.

In northern parts Kumāra is worshipped as a *Brahmachari* at places while at other places, he receives adoration with his consort, Devasena. In the Tamil country, in addition to Devasena, Subrahmanya is said to have married Valli, a huntress. Valli, Devasena, and *Sakti*, his weapon, are considered personifications of *Ichchhā*, *Kriyā* and *Jñana saktis*, *i.e.*, thought, action and knowledge respectively. Kumāra carries various weapons in his arms, which were presented to him by various Gods to assist him, in the fierce battle with Sūrapadma.

The Tamils affectionately call him Muruga; *Muruga* standing for youth, the God, a beautiful being and so on. He is also called

Śeyon, a child. The earliest surviving Tamil grammar, *Tolkappiyam* mentions him as the presiding deity of the mountain country designated as *Kurunji—Seyon meya mai varai ulagamum.*

The Tamil *Sangam* works assigned to a period ranging from the third century B.C. to the second century A.D. carry copious references to Seyon and his worship. A verse in the *Puranānūru* mentions the ever victorious Muruga, mounted on a war elephant and his standard was peacock.

Maṇimayil uyariya mārā venrip
piṇimuga ūrdi oṇ seyyonum
murogoṭṭīya munniyatu muḍittalin

—*Puram*-56

The same work refers to temples of Subrahmanya at various places :

Aṇanguḍai Murugan koṭṭam
—*Puram*-299

Veṇtalai puṇari alaikkum Sendil
Neḍuveḷ nilai iya kāmar viyanturai

—*Puram*-55

Besides the above, there are number of references relating to Muruga in other works. It is necessary, however, to mention two works of the *Sangam* period, which has a special bearing on the worship of Muruga—the *Paripāḍal* and *Tirumurugārruppaḍai*, the first of the ten idylls. The first may be said to be a literary work *par excellence* of the *Kaumāra* school. Nakkirar, the author describes in most sublime poetry the various manifestations of Subrahmanya and the path leading to a devotion and final emancipation. The divine activities of the six faces are graphically portrayed. Six places came to be specially associated with Subrahmanya and they are Tirupparamkunram, Tiruchchendur, Tiruchchengodu, Tiru Eraham, Paḷam-udir-Solai and Kunrutor-āḍal. The last mentioned is not

identified with any particular place, but all hillocks, where Muruga is invoked and worshipped. That Subrahmanya is the embodiment of knowledge and is worshipped by saints and sages as well as hunters and others is reflected in this poem.

The second work of great merit, also assigned to the *Sangam* age, is the *Paripāḍal*; a collection of poems by a number of poets. A good number of poems of this collection relate to Muruga and furnish valuable data about the legends and worship of this deity in the Tamil country. Almost all the legends known to the *Puranic* period, like his birth and attributes, the weapons presented by various gods, etc., are found mentioned in this work. Kumāra is compared in this poem to a lustrous fire. Some special traits mentioned in this work are that he is seated under a *Kadamba* tree and wore leather chappals on his feet.

In the northern tradition, the *Chandogya Upanishad* (Ch. 7) speaks of Skanda as the Supreme Being. Pāṇini's *Vyākaraṇa Sūtra* and Patanjali's *Bhāshya* on these aphorisms speak of images of Skanda and Viśākha. In the *Kāsyapa samhita* (chapter on Revati Kalpa), Kārtikeya, Viśakha, Skanda and Mahāsena are spoken of as brothers of Goddess Shashṭi. However, these four deities were merged into one being in later times. This points to the widely prevelent cult of Skanda during the times of Pāṇini in the pre-Christian era. *Kumārasāmbhava* one of the best literary works in Sanskrit by Kālidasa is devoted to the birth of Kumāra. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* describes in detail the daily libations of a householder among which we find libations to Skanda and his *pārishads*. The *Skandapurāna* in Sanskrit, and *Kandapuranam* in Tamil treat exhaustively of the exploits of Muruga.

Mention has been made of the prevalence of the *Kumāra* cult in the fifth century B.C. The dynasties that ruled India during different periods claimed to the votaries of Subrahmanya. The Kushānas and the Kshatrapas who ruled North West Frontier Provinces were great devotees of Brahmanyadeva. The coins of Kushāna King, Huvishka feature Skanda and Mahāsena holding standards surmounted by peacock. The Yaudheyas, who adopted the

republican form of government and who flourished in certain parts of the Punjab from the second century B.C. to the fourth century A.D., dedicated their kingdom to Subrahmanya and issued coins bearing his figure and legands. In some coins the legends read *Bhagvān Swami, Brahmanya Kumāra.* The devices on some of the silver coins of the Yaudeyas show six-headed Kartikeya and Kartikeya's consort Kumāradevi. On the copper coins of this clan are seen figures of Kārtikeya and his consort with the legend "*Yaudheyagaṇasya Jaya*".

In the Gandharan school Hariti is the presiding deity of Goddess fertility and children and is depicted with tender feelings on the face, with children at her breast and shoulder. She became the veritable Mother Goddess in Gandhara. Sometimes she is depicted as a four-armed deity holding a long trident and water pot in her left hand; a true counterpart of the Indian Goddess Pārvati. This probably inspired in later times, Uma carrying Skanda as a child on her lap as in the Somaskanda image of the Pallavas. A seal found at Bhita by Marshall shows a peacock with the legend *Sri Skanda Sūrasya.*

The Ikshvakus of Nagarjunakonda in the third century A.D., were great devotees of Kumāra and styled themselves "*Svami Mahāsena patighitacha*". Temples dedicated to Kārtikeya have been found during excavations at Nagarjunakonda. A two armed Kārtikeya holding a cock and *Sakti* in his arms has been found in the same place. A similar sculpture assigned to the Kshatrapas is now in the Baroda Museum. The following epithets of the rulers of the Chalukya dynasty will show their intense love and devotion to Lord Subrahmanya, *Svāmi Mahāsena Pādānudhyatia rathānān.*

In the south, the Pallavas were worshippers of Skanda. In the list of early Pallavas a number of kings bear names like Kumāra, Skanda, etc. A number of copper plate charters of the Pallavas refer to them as *Parama Brahmaṇyas*, *Paramabhāgavatas* and *Parama Māhesvaras*. The Pallavas were often equated with Kumara.

Subrahmaṇyah Kumaro Guha iva
Paramāt Iśvarāt ātta Janmā

The worship of Subrahmanya may be studied under three catagories : (a) as the Supreme Being *i.e.* the *Pradhāna* or the *Svatantra devata*; (b) on par with other deities *i.e. Samaprādhana*; and (c) as a subsidiary deity *i.e. Parivāra devata.*

Subrahmanya is considered a main *parivāra devata* in both Śiva and Vishnu temples and receives daily worship. He is either provided with a separate niche (*devakoshṭa*) on the walls of the *garbhagraha* or a subsidiary shrine within the *prākāra* of the temple. A number of early temples, especially of the Śiva cult, have survived which retain this feature to this day. In the Pallava temples of Kanchi, Subrahmanya is shown on the north wall, standing in *Samabhanga* wearing a *chhannavīra*. He is four-armed, holding *akshamāla* and *kuṇḍika* in the upper pair of arms. This emphasises that he was an embodiment of knowledge. In some of the early Chola temples of Tamil Nadu like Kilaiyur, Subrahmanya, is placed on the back niche of the *garbhagraha*, facing east.

As a *parivara devata*, Kumāra is enshrined in a subsidiary shrine in the western quarter of the temple, as at Melappaluvur (in Kalinga, Kārtikeya is shown on the northern niche of the temple). Subrahmanya is also shown on the eastern face of the *Vimāna* of the Śiva temples, sometimes on the *grīva*. Almost every Śiva temple has now a metal image of Subrahmanya, which is taken out in procession along with the main deity and forms the *Panchamūrti* concept of recent times.

That Subrahmanya was worshipped as a *Samaprādhana* deity is known from early *Sangam* works. Śiva, Balarāma, Krishna and Seyon are often referred to jointly. In laying out a village or town, the *Vāstu* texts allot a particular direction for the temple of Subrahmanya which must receive worship with other deities of the village that constitute the *devatā maṇḍala* of the layout.

A few small panel sculptures discovered in the Pallava territory show a row of deities seated on a common pedestal. The sculptures represent generally Śiva, Sakti, his consort, Narasimha with Sri, Brahma and Subrahmanya. The sculptures have come from Munnur, Manimangalam, and Tenneri. These sculptures of early Pallava

origin were evidently installed in small temples and were worshipped. The worship of Śiva, Vishnu and Subrahmanya together is of great historic interest. This would explain the titles assumed by the Pallavas as *Parama Māhesvaras*, *Parma Bhāgavatas* and *Prama Brahmaṇyas*. This would also explain some of the cave-temples excavated by the Pallavas. The Trimurti cave at Mamallapuram has three shrines carved in a row. The first one is dedicated to Subrahmanya, the central one to Śiva and the third one to Vishnu, while on the side of the rock is carved an image of Durga. The entrance of the Subrahmanya sanctum is adorned by sages, while the other sancta are flanked by *dvārapālas*. It is evident that sages are represented in the place of *dvārapālas* as Muruga is Brahmanya deva (the giver of knowledge). It has been suggested that the Arjunaratha, one of the five Rathas in Mamallapuram might have been intended for Subrahmanya. The lower rock cut cave at Tiruchchirapalli is of great interest. It has two excavated sancta, one dedicated to Śiva and the other to Vishnu, facing each other on the side walls. On the back wall are shown five panelled sculptures in a row, the centre of which represents Brahma. To the right of Brahma are Ganesa and Kumāra while on the left are Sūrya and Durga. Śubrahmanya receives equal importance with other deities. Incidentally this is perhaps the earliest surviving temple dedicated to the six deities which constitute the *Shanmata* of the Hindu religion. The cave was probably excavated by the Pallava genius, Mahendra I, in the first quarter of the seventh century A.D.

At Tirupparamkunram, near Madurai is a cave-temple excavated in the reign of the Pandyas in the eigth century A.D. The cave is of great interest as it has five sancta, two facing each other on the side walls, and three in line on the back walls. The deities that are enshrined in these sancta are Śiva, Vishnu, Subrahmanya, Ganesa and Durga. Except Surya, the other deities of the *Shanmata* are given equal importance here. It is of interest to note that such a synthesis has been attempted in Tirupparamkumram which is traditionally considered the chief abode of Subrahmanya.

Lord Muruga was worshipped as the primordial deity, *Svatantra devata* in the Tamil country from very early times. Mention has

been made earlier of the independent temples dedicated to Subrahmanya that existed during the *Sangam* age. That Thiruchendur was an important *Subrahmanya Kshetra* in early times had also been referred to earlier. The Tamil classic *Śilappadhikaram* refers to the temple of Muruga as *Velkoṭṭam*. The chapter on Kunrakkuravai in the same work extols the greatness of Muruga and the worship of the same deity by the residents of hillocks.

As a *Svatantra devata* all the other deities, including Śiva, adore his greatness. In an independent temple of Subrahmanya, Śiva and Sakti are provided with subsidiary shrines. This is reflected in a poem of *Paripāḍal*, in which the temple of Subrahmanya at Paramkunram is extolled, Śiva, Vishnu, Brahma, the twelve solar deities *dvādasa Ādityas*), the Asvins, Ashṭavasus, the eleven Rudras, the *dikpālas* and others are said to have descended on earth and reside at Parankunru, singing the praise of Lord Muruga. This is obviously a reference to the above deities enshrined as *parivāra devatas* in the *Svatantra ālaya* of Subrahmanya. This has the sanction of the *Vastu Sāstras*, and may be considered the fullblown *Kaumāra* concept.

A number of independent temples dedicated to Subrahmanya have survived in the Tamil country from at least the eighteenth century A.D., while the earlier ones have undergone modifications. A cave excavated for Subrahmanya, with probably Valli as his consort is found at Anaimalai, near Madurai. Another cave-temple exclusively dedicated to Subrahmanya is found at Kalugumalai in Tirunelveli district. An early Chola temple at Kannanur, near Pudukkottai, and another at Uttiramerur near Madras, have Subrahmanya temples of the Chola periods. A number of other temples need not be listed here.

Besides the early surviving temples, the other hallowed temples have been renovated and enlarged in subsequent periods. A number of new temples have also gradually been assuming importance during the past few centuries. The worship of Subrahmanya has received a great impetus due to the soul stirring poems of the saint Arunagiri, a contemporary of King Praudadevaraya of the Vijaynagara dynasty.

The temple of Palani, Swamimalai, Tiruttani and others attract large numbers of pilgrims throughout the year.

There are a number of early Chola bronzes of exquisite beauty that are under worship in the temples of which the image of Subrahmanya at Gangaikondacholapuram is a superb specimen of the 11th century A.D.

Kumara is worshipped by devotees for various special reasons besides the common ones. In Maharāshtra, women are said to be afraid of going to the temple of Kārtikeya. It is not possible to say why this belief is current in that part of the country. In Bengal, Kārtikeya is worshipped for child birth. It is also stated that the dancing girls of Bengal till recent times worshipped Lord Kumara on a particular night of the year.

In the Tamil countty, Muruga is adored for various reasons. The religious text dealing with the worship of Muruga is called *Kumāra tantra*.

Muruga is propitiated by the *Kuravas* for rains. They dance the *Kuravai Kūttu* for this purpose. The grains obtained from the first crop were offered to Muruga. Kumara was adored by girls for getting beautiful husbands. Married women worship him so that their husbands may bestow affectionate love on them. For begetting children, Kumara is worshipped. Women whose husbands went to the battle-front propitiated Muruga, praying for the victorious return of their husbands. While these are ephemeral requests, the ultimate aim of the Tamils in worshipping Muruga "is not fulfilment of fleeting pleasures, but the benefaction of righteous conduct, devotion and Divine grace", says *Paripāḍal*.

5

TEMPLES OF VILLAGE GODS

Temples are visual manifestations of the longing of the people who reside in their region, their fears over the mysterious unfathomable power, their desire to propitiate them and receive boons for a happy earthly life or the life beyond and as such it is difficult to draw a dividing line between the classical temple and the village temple (or what may be called more appropriately the folk- temple).

However, if for purposes of better understanding one were to classify them under two broad divisions, then the temples represented by structures built of wood, brick, or stone, which are not only mere functional buildings, but those that were built according to certain codes with articulated parts and embelishments, wherein the worship assumes a classical character, the rites and festivals following a particular code, impregnated with a philosophy for every rite, they may be called classical temples whether found in towns or villages. The other where the main motivation is the adoration of the divine, the structures or rites having no relevance to any code, are the folk-temples, whether they are located in the heart of a city or in a remote village. Though the classical temples of India, on accout of their monumental architecture, attract much attention, it is the folk-temples, several times greater in number, that reflect the living faith of the people of India.

As in any part of the word, the village temples of India owe their origin to the tribal belief in the various manifestations of nature spirits, their malevolent and benevelont power and belief in a divine hand in everything around. The trees, the rivers, the monutains, the tanks, the sea, lightning, wind, etc., have gradually grown into

the making of the village temples. Fertility cult, so widely prevelant throughout the ancient world, the faith in the Mother Goddess, led to the personification of each and every village settlement as the *Grāma devata*—the village goddess.

Early inscriptions refer to the personified deity of the city of Pushkalāvati as the Pushkalāvati devatā. Similarly the city of Madurai was personofied as Madhurāpuri devaṭā in ancient Tamil literature. The port-city of Kaveripumpattinam was called Champapathi and the personified spirit of this city was worshipped as Champapati devatā and similarly the city of Kanchi had Kanchipuri devatā, who is Kamakshi. As in these illustrious cases, each and every village had its own personified deity called the *Grāma devatā*, *i.e.*, the village goddess. She protects the villagers and guides them like a fondling mother.

The worship of natural spirits such as presiding deity of a tree called *Vrikshaka* has been popular in ancient India. The cult which was followed by Buddhists, Jains and Hindus, was represented in their sculptures. Huge carved sculptures of *Yaksha* and *Yakshi*, assignable to the first and second centuries B.C. found in parts of northern India and dealt with by eminent scholars like Ananda Coomaraswami speak of the adoration of folk deities, associating them with lakes and river banks.

One of the main forms of the classical deity which was considered a folk deity adored by hunters when they started on hunting expeditions, is called Revanta, said to be a son of Surya. He was often portrayed riding a horse, accompanied by dogs and hunters. From number of sculptures found in northern India, he seems to have been worshipped by large sections of hunters in the early historical period. It seems that this concept of Revanta, the God riding a horse, accompanied by dogs, has taken the shape of Ayyan Mahāsāstha popularly called Aiyanār in southern India. Though a different version relating to his birth is narrated in the myths found in local literature, in the extreme south, particularly in Kerala, where he is portrayed in paintings, wood and stone, his representation confirms to the identity of Revanta as found in northern

India. In fact, the *Tantrasamuchaya*, one of the important ritual texts from Kerala, gives the name Revanta as one of the titles of Sāsthā. The cult of Aiyanār, also called Sāstha or Māsāttan, is mentioned in very early literature like the *Śilappadikāram*. Sculptures of Ayyan Mahāsāstha are found from the early Pallava period viz. seventh and eight centuries A.D. in Tamil Nadu. He is now adored in almost every village of Tamil Nadu, and is often shown seated holding a whip in his hand, accompanied by his consorts, Pūrna and Pushkala. One of the most important aspects of the Aiyanār temple is the huge horse made of terracotta or brick and mortar, covered with stucco painting with a number of hunters and dogs shown accompanying the horse. The temple of Aiyanar is a common sight all over the country and often he is found is association with the temple of Piḍāri. Though he is a village god, he has also a place in classical ritual, for the architectural treatises assign a particular quarter for his temple.

Similarly, the temple dedicated to Durga or Goddess Kāli or the seven mothers called the Saptamātas all have a place in the layout of the village. But these temples dedicated to the goddesses, often called Pidāri temples, are worshipped as temples of village gods and goddesses

Another element that has gone into the making of village temples is the adoration of the serpent as Nāga or Nāgarāja. The antiquity of the serpent cult is lost in prehistoric periods and seems to have emanated essentially out of fear of the reptile. But in time it assumed great significance. Not only the serpent but also its abode, usually represented by anthills, assumed reverence. The cult of Mānasā in the eastern India owes its origin to the adoration of Nāgas. A temple dedicated to Nāgarāja assigned to the Mauryan age around third century B.C., was excavated in Mathura, in northern India. Slowly the serpent cult was associated with the worship of Goddess and assumed importance from the point of view of child birth. Women desirous of having children often plant stone-figures of coiled serpents at the foot of sacred trees like the *Asvattha* and believe that the propitiation of these Nāga stones will bestow progeny

on them. So from the tribal belief in various powers and manifestations the temples dedicated to village goddess have sprung.

One of the main concepts that have contributed to the development of village Gods is worship of heroes who have laid down their lives for the their country or community. The worship is marked by the erection of hero-stones, also called memorial stones, which are found in thousands in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Saurashtra and even Himachal Pradesh. This cult should have been prevelant in the eastern regions as well, but no systematic study seems to have been undertaken in the region.

The erection of hero-stones and adoration of the dead as the saviour spirit of the community can be considered an extension of the prehistoric cult of erecting megalithic tombs. The hero-stones are erected in the form of a dolmen with three upright slabs, in the form of a small chamber and topped by a capstone. The figure of the hero is carved on the back slab, facing the front. The representation of the hero on the slab takes various forms. The simplest is to show the figure of the hero in the act of fighting with spear, sword or bow and arrow. Often a container with a covered lid, a spouted pitcher, a mirror and other accessories are also shown by the side. These were obviously offerings made to the dead and probably buried with the dead. In some stones a bunch of arrows are shown by the side. When the hero died in a cattle raid or rescuing cattle, figures of cows, buffaloes or sheep are also portrayed. There are instances where the heroes were riding on horses or even elephants and lost their lives. They are shown on horse or elephant back. In the hilly or jungle regions wild beasts were a source of menace to the people. Some brave men killed them and lost their lives in the process. In such instances, the hero was shown fighting the beast.

One particular concept that was widely prevelant regarding heroic death was that the hero will attain heaven. On his heroic death, divine damsels descend to earth and carry him to his heavenly abode. When he reaches heaven, he will be face to face with his chosen god. This concept was quite frequently represented in hero-stones in three panels. In the bottom panel, the hero will be shown

as a fighter. In the middle panel, the divine damsels will carry him to heaven and in the top panel he will be shown adoring the deity. If he was a Śaivite, he will be shown worshipping the *linga*. If he was a Vaishnavite, Vishnu will be shown in front of him. Several such panels have been found.

In the Goa region, many naval battles have been fought and in memorial stones boats and ships taking part in a naval fight figure.

There were other forms of death which were also instrumental for hero-stones being erected. Among the heroes, hunters and hilly tribes, there was a custom of cutting one's own head and offering it to one's chosen deity. The severing of one's own head was either for bestowing victory to the country, to the monarch or in fullfilment of certain vows. In such cases, the hero would be portrayed severing his own head. In one instance a hero guarding his buffaloes was attacked by a robber and killed. But his faithful dog chased the robber and stood by its dead master. The villagers have honoured both the hero and the heroic dog by portraying their figures and recording the whole episode. The memorial was erected in the seventh century A.D., perhaps the earliest memorial known so far to have been erected for an animal. In another seventh century record, a cock is figured with its name inscribed. It was probably a favourite bird which died in a cock fight. In one instance a man died of snake bite and he was portrayed with a snake by his leg.

In quite a number cases the event relating to the death of the hero, the name of the hero, the period, and the people who erected the stone are recorded in the local language. In Karnataka over five thousand such inscribed memorials have been recorded. In Tamil Nadu recently over six hundred inscribed memorials from the fourth century A.D. to almost present times have been found. Andhra Pradesh also abounds in such stones.

This somewhat lengthy account of hero-stones is necessary to understand the social background of village temples. Often such hero-stones are found beneath trees in simple surroundings. In most cases there would be no superstructure. Originally the stones were

in the form of a dolmen on the ground, or sometimes erected over a platform. As they are the representation of the hero's spirit, long swords, spears, or tridents are planted before. Horses made of terracotta, painted purely in the folk style, are made and placed before these memorials.

The hero who laid down his life for his community, village or country was invoked in the stone and it was believed that the spirit of the hero ever resided in the stone, bestowing benefactions on the community. The spirit was dreaded, loved, adored and worshipped and was considered the saviour of the community. When the heroic death was due to a severe fight, involving the whole village, the spirit cut across community barriers and became the deity of a group of villages. There are various strata of such deities, some serving as saviour of the community to which the hero belonged; the second as the deity of a single or group of villages and the third as the deity of a wide region or territorial division, called *Nadu*.

It often happens that, when a community migrates, it instals the hero in the new settlement and worships him or annually visits the original village where the hero-stone is found and offers worship. Depending upon the numerical strength of the community and its mobility, or the exhibition of valour that captures the imagination of the populace, the hero suddenly becomes the guardian deity of all the people. Some such regional deaths known in Tamil Nadu are Madurai Viran in middle Tamil Nadu, Sudalaimadan in the extreme South and Vedan Swami in the North, Annanmar in the Kongu country. Karuppannan and other deities arose from the cult of heroic deaths. Maduraiviran, a 7th century a hero who defended the country valiantly, suffered death at the hands of the ruler in a love episode. The ruler gave orders for his execution without knowning who he was. The romantic element and the tragic end of the hero at the hands of the ruler unexpectedly and suddenly has raised a halo around him. Soon his spirit was recognised as a most powerful divinity and his temple is found in every village. The most important mark in his temple is a huge horse placed either in front of him or carrying him. People believe that his spirit ascends the

horse after dusk, and goes around the village protecting the people at night. A similar touching story, which related to the death of two brothers, who fought to save the honour of their sister, has deified the brothers, and is the principal village god in the Kongu country.

Another element in the development of village temples is the death of a women in heroic circumstances. One such death, is the chaste wife committing *sati*, dying voluntarily by entering the funeral pyre of her husband. Recorded evidences are available from the beginning of the Christian era, testifying to such customs. The spirits of women who die under such circumstances are said to be very powerful and not only protect the community but also severely punish wrongdoers. Their figures are carved on stones, enshrined and adored as *Māsati*. The most outstanding example of such a story is that of Kannagi, the heroine of the Tamil classic, *Silappadhikāram*. She is called *Vīra-mā-pattini*. It is also an example of how the spirit or a chaste woman of one community became the boon-giving deity of the whole country cutting across caste and community barriers. From hill tribes to ruling emperors, all thronged to adore her. Such worship brought abundant rains and increased the fertility of the soil. The heroes were assured of victory by proptiating her. Though the story of Kannagi is graphically portrayed in the classic, another story has caught the imagination of the people and that is the story of Renuka, the mother of Parasurama. At the bidding of his father Parasurama cut off the head of his mother, who was disturbed in her concentration by a passing gandharva. In several thousand temples of south India, the severed head of Renuka is the presiding deity which is worshipped. The death of a high-born Brahmin girl, who married an outsaste boy, or the death of a high class women molested by a servant of low birth are some stories which circulate among the populace. The stories migrate with people, assume new garbs, get localised and give rise to new village temples.

In all these instances of the adoration of the dead as the village gods the worship consists of all food and other offerings that pleased the dead while he was alive. Offerings of animal sacrifices,

and liquor are quite common modes of worship. Animal sacrifices, are often either misunderstood or blown out of proportion. They arise out of the food habits of the people. The simple concept behind this offering is whatever one eats is ceremoniously offered to the deity and then partaken. Cock, chicken and goat are offered in the presense of the deity, cooked and then consumed by the worshipper. Even the act of cutting the animal was done in the spirit of offering. So in most of the temples dedicated to the village gods animal sacrifice is a common mode of worship. There are some temples where, even cigars specially prepared are offered.

The festivals conducted for the village gods are annual features or specially arranged either to ward of natural calamities, epidemics or threat to the community by human agencies. They are celebrated with great pomp and show and are called *Kuḍai eḍuttal* (*i.e.* carrying festive umbrellas). The presence of the deity is felt so powerful that to utter a lie in the presence of the deity will bring calamity to the teller. Many disputes such as adultry and receiving loans and refusing to repay then, are settled even to this day in the village temple. In many interior villages, there is no need for civil or criminal courts to decide the nature of punishment. The temple of the village god—the impersonal spirit that permeates—is sufficient to take care of the evil doers.

The village deity wards of all deseases. If a person is affected in any part off his body, or the whole, he prays to the deity for cure and offers that part of the limb made of terracotta, wood or metal or a full terracotta figurine resembling a human form (male or female) is made and placed with devotion in front of the deity. For happy child birth, a terracotta figure of a child in a cradle is offered. To ward of diseases to cattle, figures made of clay big or small, are made and placed in the temple. Several hundred such terracotta figurines can be seen in front of village temples. On all such occassions, the folk artist (mainly the village potter) was honoured with new cloth, flower, garlands, special food and money. In fact the cult of the village god was mainly responsible for sustaining and fostering folk arts.

The cult of the village gods was the main fountainhead of inspiration for folk music and dance. Several hundred folk ballads and songs are prevelant connected with the adoration of the village heroes. During festivals these are sung by village ministrels for several hours and sometimes throughout the night. So spirited are the folk songs that even people who are in their homes rush towards the place of song in a trance, and sometimes thousands of people march in a trance, singing and dancing. The song of *Annanmār* worship in the Kongu country draws millions of people to march in vastly towards the place of heroes. This has two aspects : (1) the professional folk songsters and dancers employed during the festivals; and (2) the spontaneous participation of all the people in singing and dancing. The second aspect is usually absent in classical temples. Quite often this expression of devotion takes the form of walking over fire, piercing one's body with several thousand decorated needless, carrying in arms firepots, etc. Both men and women participate in such worship.

Since the village folks are excessively conservative, their forms of dress, ornamentation, mode of singing, etc., have preserved the ancient characters, which could be traced several centuries back. For example, in the Alagar festival held in Madurai, during March-April, several thousand villagers wear the dress and ornaments found in 16th century paintings and sculptures. It looks as if one were beholding 16th century cultural history in modern times. Another festival in Karur attracts several thousand men dressed as women moving through the streets singing and dancing. Another interesting festival is enacted in a suburb of Madras for four to five months. Several thousand men and women completely remove all cloth from their bodies, and covering their private parts with neem leaves, circumambulate the temple of the village goddess several times. That such customs, referred to in literature assigned to the beginning of the Christian era, have survived to this day, near the Capital of the state in the 20th century, shows the powerful hold these faiths have over the people.

Not infrequently such folk beliefs and customs superimpose themselves on the classical temple, almost in a happy blend. To cite an example, there is a celebrated Vishnu temple at Aḻagar Koil, near Madurai. The worship here is done by orthodox Vaishnavite Brahmins according to classical rites. At the entrance tower of the temple, is adored a folk god 'Karuppan of the steps'. The *Karuppu* is the spirit of the hero who guarded the temple and lost his life in defending the temple treasury from robbers. This *Karuppu* is held in greater veneration by the village people than the main classical deity, Vishnu. But when the annual festival is celebrated to Vishnu, several million people assemble to adore Vishnu and the Karuppu together. Millions, of people sing delightful folk songs in praise of both Vishnu and Karuppan on that occasion. Such superimposition of folk customs, music and dance on classical temples can be illustrated in the case of many temples, so much so the dividing line between the folk temple and the classical temple will vanish for an ordinary spectator.

However, there is one essential difference between the classical temple and the folk temple. In the classical temple, there is a regularly trained family of worshippers, the priests, who perform daily offerings and the periodical festivals as per a given code or what we may call adhering strictly to the grammar of rites. So there is an intermediary between the devotee and the divine. His presence was accepted as a necessity so that he will maintain constant daily worship while the rest of the community could pursue its avocation and when in need could go the temple. But in the case of the village temple the communication between the devotee and the deity is direct and so the feeling of attachment is more intimate. The divine spirit in the village temple ever remains, and anyone can go and offer worship directly. What one offers and in whatever form it is offered, the Divinity is pleased. That accounts for the greater popularity of the village temple.

EARLY SATI STONES FROM TAMIL NADU

A number of small panels in stone showing a row of deities are turning up in the Tondaimandalam region of Tamil Nadu. What do these represent or seek to convey remains obscure. The occurrence of such panels, in Andhradesa is known to scholars. Two of them (one from Peddamudiyam) are now preserved in the Government Museum, Madras. Similar panels, which have been noticed now in Tamil Nadu, come from Munnur, Manimangalam, Brahmadesam, Ukkal, Uttiramerur and Kanchipuram; all in Tondaimandalam.

The panels generally show Brahma, Śiva in *linga* form, Uma, Subrahmanya, Narasimha and Sri as *Srivatsa*; all of them shown often seated, sometimes standing as well. Additional deities like Ganesa, Durga or Jyeshta are figured. A shaft like object with a split at the top is shown either alone or on a lotus base. Four human figures, two in the middle standing with folded arms in adoration, flanked by two feminine figures, one on either side, holding what looks like a bud or *chauri* are also figured. What do this shaft like object and human figures represent?

The shaft like object, represent two forearms, standing seperately or issuing from a shaft. The arms are clearly visible in some panels and are not so in others. In the Manimangalam panel two forearms wearing bangles are clearly visible. The arms are also seen in the Peddamudiyam and Uttiramerur panels.

It is well-known that in ancient times some women committed, *Sati* by burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Instances are also known when the body of the husband was buried, the wife was also buried alive. Such women were honoured and

worshipped, by erection of memorial stones popularly known as *Mahā Sati* stones. Many inscribed stones, often large slabs with carvings on them, have come to light in the Karnataka–Andhra region, but most of them belong to medieval period. Such *Sati* stones, portray one or two fore arms, wearing bangles, issuing from a shaft. A couple representing the dead husband and the wife who committed *Sati* are also shown. Sometimes the figures of sun and moon are also depicted. The inscription would give the name of the women and the history of *Sati*. The representation of bangle wearing forearm symbolizes the eternal chastity of the wife who committed *Sati*.

It may be mentioned that, when hero-stones were erected on the death of brave men, the heroes are portrayed as ascending heaven accompanied by divine maidens, who would be shown with fly-whisks or flowers in their arms flanking the hero. The *apsaras* flanking the hero, and the hero shown with arms in *anjali hasta* is a very common motif found in hundreds of hero-stones. From the above it would be evident that in the panels under discussion, of the four human figures two in the middle standing with *anjali-hasta*, and the femenine figures flanking them would represent the dead couples. The representation of Brahma, Śiva, Vishnu and other deities indicate that the couple have reached *Devaloka* where they stand face to face with Gods and Goddesses. The presense of fore-arms in the panels indicate that they are *Sati* stones. However, it is not clear why forearms are chosen to represent *Sati* and why they are shown issuing from a shaft. The earliest memorials to the dead with figure sculptures and inscriptions are in the form of shafts or pillars and are called *chāyā stambhas* in Nagarjunakonda inscriptions. May be this association of the *stambha* (shaft) with memorial to the dead has led to its portrayal.

As mentioned earlier, most of the *Sati* memorials so far known relate to medieval period (*i.e.* 9th century and later). The present panels from Tondaimandalam are clearly of the Pallava period and are to be assigned to 7th-8th century A.D.

7

THE VARAHA TEMPLE AT SRIMUSHNAM

Srimushnam seems to have assumed importance from the middle of 11th century A.D. in Chola times. There are two big temples—one dedicated to Śiva and another to Vishnu in his *Varaha* incarnation in this village. The Varaha temple is outstanding from the point of view of religious as well as architectural history.

The ancient name of the village was Sungam Tavirta Chola-nallur, evidently named after Kulottunga Chola I (A.D. 1070-1125). His inscriptions are found in the Vishnu as well as the Śiva temples. In the Śiva temple, records of the Cholas, the Pandyas, and the Vijayanagara Rajas are found. In the Vishnu temple most of the inscriptions belong to 15th-17th century A.D. (Vijayanagara and Nayak periods) though a few Chola inscriptions are also noticed.

It is the Varaha temple, situated to the east of the village, which receives the attraction of visitors. At the entrence is an imposing *Garudasthamba*, a monolithic column, rising to over 10.6m in height carrying a small ornamental pavilion at the top, housing an image of Garuda. The *gopura*, the *maṇḍapa* and other structures were added in the 15th-16 century A.D. The main deity is Bhuvaraha, the embodiment of Supreme knowledge (*Jñanappirān*). The processional deity is called Yajñavaraha. The goddess is called Ambujavalli. There are subsidiary shrines to Srinivasa, Lakshminarayana, Rama, Andal, Ramanuja and others. The main *vimāna* in the *vesara* style is called the Pavana vimana.

During the invasion of Hyder Ali, it is said, the outer *gopura* suffered damage by cannon balls and the damage is even now

identified. It is the sixteen-pillared *maṇḍapa*, that is virtually an architectural gem of the Thanjavur Nayak dynasty. Built by Achyutappa, the second ruler of the Thanjavur Nayak dynasty in the latter half of the 16th century, the *maṇḍapa* is elaborately planned and intricately carved from base to top. In the cardinal directions are sculptures of cavalry men. In the centre of the *maṇḍapa*, the pillars carry portraits of the builder Achyutappa Nayak and his queen, Murtiamma. Other portraits are identified locally with his brothers, Anantappa, Kondappa and Govindappa. It is said that Achyutappa had an ailment which was cured by the presiding deity Bhuvaraha of this temple and to commemorate this he built this *maṇḍapa*. The *maṇḍapa* is called Purusha Sukta mandapa, as it has sixteen pillars. It is a treat to see the base and ceilings of this *maṇḍapa*.

Vedanta Desika has extolled the greatness of this deity. Both the sub-sects of the Vaishnava faith are greatly attached to this temple. Besides, Madhvas also are great devotees of the temple and hold rights over certain recitations in the temple. Besides Vedic and Tamil hymns, the recitation of *Puranas* receives special attention in this temple. The *Madhvapurana*, *Gajendramokshapurana*, *Vishnupurana*, *Kaisikipurana* and the local *sthalapurana* are recited.

A point of interest in this temple is the special offering to Varaha, which consists of a sweet prepared from *Koṛai* roots, which is held very dear to Him.

In the reign of Krishnadevaraya special worships were endowed. A family of chieftains known as Kachchiyarayas were great benefactors of the temple. In 1857 a certain Gundappa, son of Vasudevappa, hailing from Bellary district, built the steps of the Nitya Pushkarini tank.

An event of great interest is the visit Lord Bhrvaraha to Killai village near Bhuvanagiri every year during the *Māsi* festival when special offerings are made to a Muslim *darga*.

8

KAPALISVARA TEMPLE AT MYLAPORE

The Kapalisvara temple in Mylapore (a part of Madras city) has been a historic shrine from very early times. Mylapore was and is a coastal township. Once it was full of pleasant groves reverpating the joyous cries of peacocks. The Tamil word *mayilappil* is said to mean the place where the peacock cries in joy. Early literature refers to this place as *mayilapil.* The Sanskrit from of the word is *Mayurasabdapaṭṭana.* Buddhaghosha a great Buddhist monk, is said to have lived here and at the request of Buddhamitra composed his *Visuddhimāgga.* In this text, the town is mentioned as Mayurasatia paṭṭanam. While referring to Vayilar, the Saivite saint, Sundarar mentions Mylapore as a very ancient town—*tonmayilai.* It was a sufficiently big town. Triplicane (another part of present Madras city) is mentioned in early literature and inscriptions as a hamlet of Mylapore. Mylapore is also the birth place of the Śaivite saint, Vayilar and the Vaishnavite saint, Peyalvar. Sambandar's visit to Mylapore and his bringing Pumbavai back to life are well-known incidents. Sambandar was a younger contemporary of Tirunavukkarasu (Vāgiśa) who converted the Pallava king Mahendravarman I to Śaivism. Mahendravarman ruled over Tondaimandalam from A.D. 600 to 630.

Ever since the visit of Sambandar, the Kapalisvara temple had attaind great religious significance. The original temple, according to some sources, was located very near the sea. Probably due to sea erosion, it had to be shifted to the interior. The present temple seems to have been reconstructed and is devoid of early sculptures. It faces west and the *Amman* shrine, which is usually

to the left of the Lord, is here to his right. The eastern *gopura* is said to have been renovated in 1908. A sculpture representing a couple standing in adoration is noticed on the right wall of the eastern entrance on the inner side. One of the figures is probably of the person responsible for the construction of the entrance tower. In 1948 the stucco figures were renovated and a *Kumbabhishekam* performed.

INSCRIPTIONS

Owing to the reconstruction, the temple has lost many of its old inscriptions which would have otherwise thrown valuable light on its history. At present over twenty fragmentary inscriptions are visible and most of them are found on the inner and outer sides of the *prākāra* wall of the *Amman* shrine.

An inscription inside the *prākāra* of the Amman shrine records the gift of wet and dry lands (with their boundaries mentioned) in the village of Semmanapakkam in Jayamkondacholamandalam. An inscription by its side records the agreement of the donees to provide for all the expenses of *Tiruvunnaligai*, etc. Another inscription, on the outer side of the *prākāra* at the back, mentions Tribhuvanachakravartigal Rajarajadeva III and refers to the place as Palla (va)rpuram or Vanavanmadevi Chaturvedimangalam. An inscription of Tribhuvanachakravarti Sundarapandyadeva A.D. 1250, who conquered the Cholas and Tondaimandalam and another of Tribhuvanaviradeva are also noticed. The other visible inscriptions are fragments.

The annual festival of this temple is celebrated with pomp and show. The Adikaranandi festival, the *kathotsava* and the festival of the sixty-three Śaivite saints draw a large number of devotees. Particularly the festival of sixty-three saints is very famous.

It will be interesting to trace in brief the worship of these saints in religious history. The *Sivāgamas* do not refer to the worship of these saints as such. However, they specifically mention the worship of the devotees. Though Appar and Sambandar refer to some of the devotees among the sixty-three, a codified list of sixty-

two saints is given for the first time by Sundarar in his *Tiruttoṇḍatogai*. Including him the total number of the saints becomes sixty-three.

Sundarar is considered to be a contemporary of the Pallava king, Kaḷarchingan, who is eulogised by him in glowing terms as one who was engaged in ruling the world surrounded by sea (*Kaḍalsuḻnda ulagelām Kākkinṛa Perumāḷ*............). Kaḷarchingan is identified with the Pallava king, Rajasimha (690-730), who was one of the greatest devotees of Śiva and had the title of *Śivachudāmaṇi*.

Some of the saints among the sixty-three stand out prominently in history. Apart from the four great saints, Appar and others, Kochchengannan, Cheraman Perumal, Siruttondar, Aidigal Kadavarkon (this king is identified with Pallava Simhavarman) and Kadavarkoṇ Kaḻarchingan are well-known. The *Tirutoṇḍatogai* of Sundaramurti was enlarged by Nambiandar Nambi in the 10th century and it was put in an epic form by Sekkilar in his *magnum opus*, the *Periyapuranam*. Three important works in Sanskrit deal with the life of the sixty-three saints, *Skandapurana*, *Śivarahasya*, and *Śivabhakta mahātmya*. The names of the saints are sanskritised in these works.

Interestingly, the sixty-three saints were very popular in the Kannada country. The Kannada works, *Aruvattumuvarpuratancharite* in prose, *Trishashti puratana charite* in poetry by Karnataka Chakravarti and *Aruvattumuvar puratana saraṇara charite* by Virupaksha kavi are famous and deal with the life of these saints as found in the Tamil country. The saints are designated by their Tamil names in these Kannada works.

Representations of the saints in sculptures are fairly well-known from about the ninth century. The Vasishtesvara temple of Karuntatangudi, which is ascribed to about 10th century, carries beautiful sculptures of Tirunavukkarasu and Sambandar. During the period of Rajaraja I and his successors, many copper images of the saints were gifted to Thanjavur and other temples. The earliest representation of all the sixty-three saints is noticed in the

Airavatesvara temple of Darasuram, where they are shown in the *prākāra* wall and the name of each saint is inscribed below. Scenes from the life of some of the saints, including Appar, Sambandar and Sundaramurti are noticed with label-inscriptions at the base of the central shrine. This temple was constructed by Rajaraja II (A.D. 1150-73) who held the title of *Rajagambhira*. He was the son of Kulottunga II.

Sekkilar was Kulottunga's minister and expounded his *Periyapurāṇam* at Chidambaram. It is but proper that Kulottunga's son should have given a prominent place to the sixty-three saints. Ever since, the saints have been represented in all the temples and their festivals performed in a grand scale; and the festival at Mylapore is the most popular.

9

TIRUPPERUNTURAI—A YOGA PITHA STHALA

Tirupperunturai, popularly called Avudaiyarkoil, is about 12 km from Arantangi, on the Mayuram-Karaikkudi railway line. Situated in picturesque surroundings, on the banks of the river Vellar, the place is held in great veneration by the Śaivites on account of its association with the Śaiva saint, Manikkavāchakar. Traditionally, the place is known by various names as Ādikailāsa, Upadesasthala, Kuruntavana, Parāsaktipura, Yogapīṯhapura and Śivapuram.

Tirupperunturai assumed importance from the time of Manikkavāchakar. The saint hailed from Tiruvadavur in Madurai District and was the first minister to the Pandya ruler, Varaguna. As minister, he was called Tennavan Brahmamahārāyan. The ruler gave him a large sum of money to buy horses. When the minister reached Tirupperunturai, the divine atmosphere attracted him. Lord Śiva himself, seated below a *Kurunta* tree as a teacher, bestowed his grace on the saint who was enchanted by the beauty of the Lord and then onwards had no attraction for worldly things. All the money he brought from the Pandyan kingdom was spent in the service of the Lord. Manikkavāchakar is known for his ability to communicate to the devotees his personal spiritual experiences in soul stirring and sublime poetry. His hymns, forming a veritable treasure of Śaiva faith, are grouped into a book *Thiruvāchakam.* It was during his sojourn at Tirupperunturai, that he composed many of the famous poems, like the *Tiruvembāvai* and the *Pūvalli.*

When the king learned of the deeds of his minister, he got furious and punished him by putting him behind the bars. Lord Śiva himself converted a number of jackals into beautiful horses and

gave them to the king as having been bought by the Minister. This miracle of Śiva, turning jackals into horses and leading them to the king is an oft repeated theme in literature and sculpture. According to the story, the horses are said to have turned again into jackals and disappeared after causing considerable havoc. As Manikkavāchakar was intiated by the Lord himself in Tirupperunturai and as many of the verses of *Tiruvāchakam* were written there, it occupies a pre-eminent position in the history of Śaivism.

Tirupperunturai has many unique features. In the sanctum, the main deity is only a *pīṭha* (an altar) and there is no *liṅga* or other form of Śiva; all worship is offered to this *pīṭha* alone. It seeks to represent the absolutely formless form of Śiva who is the very soul of the Universe, *Ātmanātha*. So also there is only a *pīṭha* in the form of *Srīvidya Meruchakra* in the sanctum of the goddess and no image. The Devi in this form is called Yōgāmbika. Nor do we find here the Nandi, the *balipiṭha* and the flagstaff as found in other temples. Everything in this temple is representative of Divine knowledge, suggested by formless forms. Unlike other temples, where various aspects of Śiva, His consort and other deities are taken out on festival days, only the image of Saint Manikkavāchakar is taken out in procession.

There are many imposing structures in the temple, known for their architectural splendour and sculptural wealth. The *gopura* in the south is majestic. The *maṇḍapas* are known for their intricate workmanship. Massive stone blocks have been quarried and sized into excellent cornices, simulating wooden reaper work. It speaks to the high level of technical efficiency achieved by the stone masons and traditional craftsmen to day say that it would be impossible for them to achieve that efficiency. There are many remarkable sculptures in the temple that are representative of 17th century art.

The portraits of Saint Manikkavāchakar in his various forms naturally find a prominent place. The miraculous story of Śiva leading jackals as horses is portrayed in sculpture. There is a fine group of a hunter and his wife, which are typical portrayals of the

Nayaka period. Sculptures of Narasimha, *Ūrdhava tāṇḍava* Siva, Kali, and Ganesa are other sculptures that attract attention. The *maṇḍapa* in front of Nandisvara, Manikkavāchakar shrine, was built by Raghunatha Bhupala, whose portrait is found there. The Tyagarajamandapa was built by Achyuta Bhupala, and completed by Vanangamudi Muthu Tondaiman.

By about A.D. 1600 the temple witnessed a great structural activity at the hands of one Vamadeva Pandaram, who is called *Tiruppaṇikarta* in inscriptions. Many of the *maṇḍapas* with sculptures came into existence during this period. According to epigraphs available in the temple, the village Tirupperundurai was also called *Pavitramānika chaturvedimangalam*, in the subdivision of Miḻalaik-kūrram.

Besides this temple of historic importance, there are two others in the village which have been in existence from the 11th century A.D. The Śiva temple of Ādikailasanātha received endowments in the reign of Kulottunga Chola III in the 12th century A.D. It seems to have been built earlier by a person having the title Kuvalaya-Chandra. The Vishnu temple, now called Gajendraperumal, was built in the 11th century A.D. by a Chola-Pandya viceroy and is called Chola-Pandya Vinnagaram in inscriptions.

10

THE NARRUNAIPPAN TEMPLE AT NANIPALLI

Nanipalli, also called Punjai, is about nine kilometres from Kaveripattinam. That it was a great centre of Śaivism is attested by the visit of Saint Tirunavukkarasu (Appar), the contemporary of the Pallava king, Narasimhavarman I (630-660). The village was also graced by Tirugñanasambandar during the same period. Nambi Andar Nambi, who lived in the 10th century A.D., states in his *Kaliṟṟuppa-diyar* and also in *Tiru Ulāmālai* that Nanipalli was a desert land which became fertile by the auspicious visit of Jñanasambandar. The temple of Naṟṟunaiappan and his consort Parratarajaputri is thus well-known. The present temple is a *Karraḷi i.e.,* a stone structure ascribed to the period of the Chola king, Aditya II. The front hall and the *garbhagriha* are spacious with high ceilings, and it is said that this was so designed by the king to permit his elephant bringing *Tirumanjana* water into the *garbhagriha* and pouring it on the image of the deity.

The temple has a series of remarkable sculptures in its *deva-koshtas.* On the southern niche in the front is a beautiful image of Ganesa with four arms, seated on a pedestal. In the next niche is Agastya, the Tamil sage, seated on a high pedestal with two arms. His right arm is held in *chinmudra* while the left holds *kuṇḍika.* The head is adorned with matted locks, while a long beard is noticed on the face. The *upavīta* is ribbon-like. Though the sage is shown stout with a big belly, it is perhaps the finest Agastya sculpture known to exist.

The southern niche of the *garbhagriha* is adorned by Dakshina-murti of remarkable beauty. The Lord is seated on a pedestal with his right leg resting on the *apasmara* and the left placed on the right

thigh. The God is shown with four arms, holding an *akshamāla* and fire in upper arms and *chinmudra* and the vedas in the lower arms. A *jaṭābhara* adorns the head. On the right of his leg is shown a *naga* while on the left are two antelopes. On either side are sages receiving the great message. The sculpture is the embodiment of all divinely charm and grace attributed to Dakshinamurti by the great *advaita* philosopher, Sankaracharya, in his *Dakshinamurti śataka.*

At the back of the *garbhagriha* the *devakoshta* carries an interesting Lingodhbhava. A prominent lotus with well-spread petals is shown below the boar aspect of Vishnu. In the northern niche of the *garbhagriha* a charming Brahma is found standing on a lotus pedestal with three heads and four arms. It resembles the Brahma sculpture in the Nagesvara temple of Kumbhakonam. A remarkable Durga is noticed in the northern niche. The flexions of the body, the *tribhanga* posture and the face are charming. A trident is shown behind her right. At the top of the panel on either side of her head are shown her mounts, the lion and the antelope. To the right by the side of her feet, is a seated figure cutting off his own head and on her left is a kneeling hero offering worship. A buffalo's head is shown below the feet of the Devi.

On the *adhishṭana* are noticed miniature sculptured panels depicting *Ramayana* scenes and other episodes. An impressive image of Chandikesvara is now in the temple. It must be admitted that no description could do adequate justice to the beauty of the sculptures. Chola art is noticed at its best here.

There is a beautiful metal image of Nataraja with his consort in the temple.

There are many inscriptions in this temple. According to the inscriptions, Nanipalli was a *Brahmadeya* in Akkur nadu, a sub-division of Jayamkondacholavalanadu. An inscription in the 22nd regnal year of Rajakesarivarman Rajaraja I, records a gift of ten *velis* of land by the king for the maintenance of a feeding house, Arulmoli-devan, and for the daily offerings of *havirbali* to God Adavallan in the temple. It also records another tax-free gift of five *velis* for the

annual festival in the month of Chittirai in the 17th regnal year of the king. Another inscription in the third year of Parakesarivarman Rajendra II records are agreement to pay the taxes on certain lands *in lieu* of the interest on eighty *kāśus* received in parts by the assembly from an officer Irumudichola Muvendavelar in the 36th year of Vijayarajendradeva who died on elephant back and in the 3rd year it is recorded that the produce from the land was to be utilised for the midday service to the images of Tiruvalampuramudaiya nayanar, his consort and Pillaiyar set up in the temple by the officer. It also registers a gift of thirty *kaḷanjus* made to the temple for beating the *kachcholam* on the marriage of Alappirantar, made in the 32nd year of Parakesari Rajendra Chola deva who took Purvadesa, Gangai and Kidaram.

Another inscription, in the 16th year of Rajendra records an agreement by the assembly of Talanchangadu to pay the taxes on behalf of the temple to meet the expenses of the daily worship and offerings and to hold special festival once a year to the image of Rishabhavahana deva for securing victory to the king's arms. This refers to a metal image of Rishabhavahana deva, which unfortunately is missing. Another inscription in the second year of Rajadhiraja refers to a gift of money realised on taxes for worship and offerings to the image Mulapurushar Vinayaka pillaiyar set up in the temple. During the third year of the same king certain privileges were granted by the temple authorities to certain members of the *anuloma rathakara* castes, including blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters and stone masons. After eleven years an order was issued by the assembly to four individuals for gifting two hundred *kāśus* for setting up metal images of *Tiruchchalavelaikkarar* who sacrified their lives by entering fire to attest the ownership of the temple of certain *devadana* lands as against the same by these four persons who had ultimately to make them over to the temple and a make an additional gift of land for worship to these images.

11

THE MONOLITHIC ART OF KALUGUMALAI

Kalugumalai is now a tiny village with dusty roads. Once in a year, a village market is held here for the sale of thousands cows and bullocks.

Making matches, is the main cottage industry in this village. But in ancient times, duing the times of the Pandyas it was an important military centre. A hero-stone, still preserved in the village, records the death of two soldiers when they fought for the Pandya against the Ay chieftain Karunantadakkan of Malainādu, during the seige of Aruvikkottai, in A.D 790. The Pandya ruler then was Parantaka Varguna I. One of the heroes hailed from Puntanmali in Tondainadu near Madras. Some of the endowments of the Pandya period were administered by military garrisons stationed here, their names are given as 'Parāntaka vira and Tirumalai vira'.

VETTUVANKOIL

While the monolithic temples popularly called *rathas* at Mamallapuram are well-known for their architectural splendour and sculptural beauty, very few are aware of the existence of an equally captivating monolithic *ratha* type of temple at the extreme south of Tamil Nadu at Kalugumalai, near Tirunelveli. This is a mute witness to the height of artistic expression achieved by the Pandya rulers of Madurai.

In point of time, the Kalugumalai monolith is not far removed from the Mamallapuram *rathas*. It should have come into existence within fifty years of Mamallapuram, in the eighth century A.D. The author of this wonderful creation, whoever he might have been, was

destined, like his Pallava counterpart of Mamallapuram, to leave his creation incomplete. More fortunate was another architect (or was he the same ?), working at the famous rock-cut temple of Kailasa at Ellora, for he could exclaim on seeing his completed monument that it could not be the creation of a mortal like himself, but the work of the very gods.

The Vettuvankoil has some similarities with the Kailasa of Ellora. Like the latter, a part of a sloping hill has been separated from the parent rock and the monolith carved in the centre. This is in contrast to the Mamallapuram *rathas* which were carved from free-standing hillocks. Scholars discern many architectural similarities between the Pandyan creation and the Chalukyan idiom. The migration of artists from south to north and *vice versa* is borne out by epigraphy.

The superstructure of the Vettuvankoil has been completed but its lower part remains unfinished. What careful planning and execution this monolith presents! The horizontal and vertical lines, drawn as guidelines on the rock-faces by the master artist, are still seen. The designer was not simply an architect, but a sculptor *par excellence*, for it is here in the sculpture he has excelled all artistic achievements. The moment one sees these sculptures one's heart would leap with joy and would unconsciously exclaim what great art it is! Every one of these sculptures (there are nearly one hundred on the monolith) is a masterpiece, a delicate carving of aesthetic splendour. Various aspects of Śiva, Vishnu, the *Dikpālas*, divine damsels, and dwarfish *gaṇas* dancing in ecstacy are real gems of sculptural art. The sculpture of the divine teacher here is a masterpiece. There is freshness in the decorative designs. One feels that the work has been moulded in wax or soft clay rather than on hard stone.

JAIN SCULPTURES

A little away from the Vettuvankoil monolith, on the rock-face of the same hill are seen an impressive row of Jain images portraying Mahavira, Neminatha, Parsvanatha and other *Tirthankara* images and also Bahubali (Gommatesvara) and *Yakshi* figures.

Some of the figures are classical images, particularly the ones showing Mahavira, seated under triple umbrella and the meandering branches of the *aśoka* tree, topped by Indra on elephant and other deities. The feminine figures—as in the *Yakshi* figures and the accompanying figures of Bahubali—are voluptously treated, recalling the feminine beauty described in *Jivakachintāmaṇi*, a Jaina work in Tamil of the same period.

Below each sculpture there is an inscription in old Tamil or Vaṭṭeluttu script giving the name of the person who got the image carved. These epigraphs are a veritable mine of information on the social history of the times, partcularly of Jain religion. Jain monks, nuns, and lay disciples from important Jain centres of Tamil Nadu figure as donors of the rock sculptures. From Kadaikkattur in North Arcot District to Tirucharanattumalai (Sitaral) in Kanyakumari District, donors are mentioned. Nagarkoil, then known as Kottaru, was an important Jain centre from where many asceties hailed and are respectfully mentioned in these incriptions.

INSCRIPTIONS

There are two inscriptions dated in the reign of the Pandya ruler, Maranjaḍaiyan—probably identical with Parantaka Varaguna I (later half of the eighth century A.D.)—in whose regin a committee was constituted to provide food for ten ascetics, including the exponents of *Siddhānta*, out of an endowment created by a *Dharmachitta*. The committee was constituted by an ascetic, Gunasāgara Bhaṭṭāra, a teacher, who also figures in an inscription below a sculpture. It is, therefore, evident that all these Jain sculptures were carved in about A.D. 775 It is also seen that there were a number of female disciples studying under male ascetics and male disciples under Jaina nuns. A Brahmana is seen making an endowment to this Jain settlement, an example of tolerance.

There is a popular belief that Jainism was wiped out of Tamil land as a result of the works of Śaivite and Vaishnavite saints in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. But the sculptures and inscriptions at Kalugumalai, as well as at other Jain centres of Tamil

Nadu, show a sudden efflorescence of Jainism in the eighth century A.D.

The inscriptions at Kalugumalai refer to the village as Nechchuram and the Jain temple as Tirumalai Bhaṭṭārar or Āḻvār or Devar.

On the other side of the hill, in the midst of the village, is a temple of Subrahmanya, which is even now a great centure of pilgrimage. The *mūlasthana* where the image of Subrahmanya is enshirned is a rock-cut cave of probably the eight century. The original cave had no sculptures. Through the centuries, many structures have been added before this *guha* including shrines to Siva and Uma. This cave-temple has inspired much devout literature for the past few centuries.

THE END OF THE STORY

With such a recorded history it is unfortunate that the name of the author of that jewel, the Vettuvankoil, is not known. No doubt there is joy for art historians in trying to know the unknown. But the fascinating sculptures and the unfinished nature of the monolith have inspired the local people to create an absorbing story.

A sculptor who lost trace of his only son could not trace him and ever since he devoted his whole life to sculpt and soon won distinction. After several years, while he was carving the Jain sculpptures at the Kalugumalai hill, a young talented sculptor appeared and started carving the monolith now called Vettuvankoil. The people were delighted to see two master artists vying with each other. Soon they could perceive the truimph of the youth. The old sculptor thought that had his son been with him the stranger could not steal the laurels now. This thought turned into jealousy and anger. One early morning the whole valley echoed with the sound of the chisel like sweet music. The youth was at work. Every tick of the chisel increased the anger of the old sculptor up the hill. He drew his large chisel and threw it with all the power in the director of the music. The sound of chiselling suddenly ceased. Even he could not bear

the sudden but melancholy silence and ran like a mad man in that direction to see for the first time the wonderful creation of the youth and also the tragic death of the young sculptor by his cruel chisel which had chopped his head off. It was not his enemy but his own lost son, his own flower. Ever since the temple remained unfinished and came to be called Vettuvankoil.

No better story could have been invented with deeper pathos to account for the unfinished nature of the work, the Vettuvankoil, a delight to art students.

TEMPLE AT TIRUVARUR

Achalesvara, a small shrine in the second *prākāra* of the Tyagaraja temple of Tiruvarur, is an interesting early Chola temple; interesting for its impressive structure and elegant sculptures adoring the niches of the outer walls of the shrine. It is a moderate-sized shrine consisting of a small *garbhagriha*, preceded by an *antarāla* and a *mahāmaṇḍapa* and having its main entrance facing west. The *garbhagriha* and the *antarala* are the original structures, the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and the portico being later additions. In addition, the *mahāmaṇḍapa* has an opening facing the south, preceded by an open *maṇḍapa* also, a later structure. The *vimāna* has undergone renovations in recent times.

The presiding deity, now called Achalesvara, is mentioned in the inscriptions as Tiru Araneri Iśvara, the name by which he is referred to in early Tamil literature also. The lives of four saivite saints, amongst the sixty-three, are intimately connected with this temple. The life of Naminandi Adigal is the most famous that deserves mention here.

This great devotee of Śiva was looking after lighting the lamps of the temple. At the instance of the *Sramanas* (Jains), the people of the village once refused to supply him oil for lighting the temple lamps. The saint prayed to the Almighty that he may be blessed to overcome the difficulty and with His blessings was able to keep the lamps burning with the water from the temple tank. Appar, who was a contemporary of Mahendravarma Pallava I, refers to this episode in his *Tiruviruttam*.

Architecture

The small square *garbhagriha* and the preceding *antarāla* contain sixteen niches around the outer walls, wherein are placed elegant sculptures, much in the same way as at Srinivasanallur and Kumbhakonam. The *yāli* frieze at the base, which is very pronounced at Srinivasanallur and other early Chola temples, like the Brahadisvara temple of Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, is absent in this temple. Circular, square and octogonal pilasters adorn the outer walls with floral designs and big *phalakas*, characteristic of early Chola temples. The *adhishṭhāna* has *padmakośa* ornamentation. The niches, flanked by pilasters, are surmounted by *kuḍu* ornamentation with floral designs issuing from the mouth of *makara* on either side encircling elegant sculptures in *bas relief*. Small square panels of *bas reliefs* are noticed at the base also, a feature characteristic of the period.

There is no vase ornamentation on the outer walls as at Srinivasanallur or Kumbhakonam. The roll cornice contains *kuḍus* encircling human heads; below the cornice are frieze of *gaṇas* and above the cornice could be noticed the *yāli* frieze. The *mahāmaṇḍapa*, which abuts the *antarala* with pilaster and window ornamentation but devoid of niches and sculptures, is a later addition, as could be seen from the way in which it hides the niche and *kuḍu* ornamentation. A close study of this with much of the architectural details resembling the main shrine will place the date of addition within a hundred years of the original structure.

The *maṇḍapa* on the southern side with a flight of steps, abuts the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and hence is a later structure. The *maṇḍapa* is a raised platform, in fact, the whole temple is on a raised platform. The roofs are supported by pillars with seated lions at the bottom. The capitals and the big *phalaka* of the pillar suggest that the *maṇḍapa* could not be dated later than A.D. 1250. Inside the *mahāmaṇḍapa* is placed a Naṭaraja image with Sivakāmi.

Sculptures

The central niche on the south wall of the *garbhagriha* probably contained a Dakshinamurti which is missing and in its place a modern piece is placed with a small sanctum added in front. The central niche at the back wall contains lingapurāṇadevar (lingodbhava), with Brahma and Vishnu, represented as swan and boar respectively; on either side of niche they are represented as standing in adoration. In the central niche of the *garbhagriha* facing north is Brahma with three heads and four arms, in standing posture. On either side of these central niches are recesses containing portrait sculptures, probably of kings, with two arms, holding flowers in the right. These portraits, flanking the three main deities on the outer wall of the *grabhagriha*, are in profile with two arms; one of the arms in the *Kaṭyavalambita* pose and the other holding flowers as offerings. A broad *vastrayañopavīṭa* is adorning the figure while the head bears *jaṭāmakuṭa*. There are five such sculptures (the sixth one is missing) resembling each other. Like *dvarāpalakas* flanking the main deity, these sculptures stand on either side of these three main deities around the *garbhagriha*.

Ardhanarisvara, Durga, Bhikshatana, Agastya, Ganesa and Nataraja scuptures are found in the niches on the south and the north walls of the *antarāla*. The positions of the figures of Ganesa and Durga on south and northern sides are conventional. Of the few temples, dated prior to the time of Rajaraja I, none is known to have had the sculpture of Nataraja in the *Ānanda Taṇḍava* mode, as could be seen at Srinivasanallur and Kumbhakonam. Strangely enough, there are two sculptures of Nataraja in the temple, occupying adjacent niches in the south wall; only a niche containing Ganesa intervening. But it is quite unfortunate that both the sculptures are badly mutilated; the major part of the body, legs, etc., are missing. There could be no doubt as to their identity. The *jaṭāmakuṭa* bearing moon, etc., is well-preserved with flowing *jaṭas* on either side. The figure of Ganga is represented on the right *jaṭā*. The palms of upper arms carrying fire and *ḍamaru* are also clearly seen; the face is badly damaged. The body, hands, legs, etc., are completely missing.

The leg thrown across the body is clearly seen. The right leg placed on the *apasmara,* who is represented as in all other Nataraja icons, is also seen. On to the left of this mutilated sculpture could be noticed Kali, in *bas relief,* also represented as dancing with eight arms. She is represented as an ematiated deity performing her dance. Below this sculpture could be noticed three figures; one with four arms probably representing Vishnu playing the musical instrument called *kudumuḻa*; the other is a dwarf with the face of Tumburu playing *viṇā* while the third, also a *gaṇa*, plays cymbals.

It is interesting that there are two Kali figures represented on either side of the Nataraja fiures at Kandiyur and at Gangaikonda-choḷapuram; the figure of Karaikal Ammai, a great woman devotee of Śiva, is also represented below in both the sculptures mentioned above. But the Nataraja sculpture in the temple has only one Kali figure and it is interesting, as this figure is also made to dance on Muyalaka. The figure of Karaikkal Ammai is, however, absent. On the eastern side is Saint Vyaghrapāda seated in *anjali* pose with his body below the waist shown as a tiger.

This is perhaps the period when the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava* mode not only caught the imagination of the Chola emperors but also became crystalised into a form of expression. We see, here of all the various representations, the Nataraja alone being represented twice on the southern wall. It is but proper that the early Chola artist, who was at work in this temple, was so enamoured of this divine mode that he thought fit to represent the same figure, side by side and thus immortalise the glory of Nataraja. The other Nataraja, very close to the *mahāmaṇḍapa,* also mutilated bears close resemblance. But Patanjali, Vyāghrapāda and the musical party below the panel are not represented.

The figure of Ganesa in between these Nataraja sculptures is conventional, with a *chhatra* above the head. In the south wall is Agastya, the bearded sage, seated with a *kuṇḍika* in his left hand and *akshamāla* on the right. He is represented as a short pot-bellied *rishi,* adorned ,with *akshamālas* and a broad *vastrayañopaivta.* To

the left of him is a standing figure, probably that of a sage, in the pose of adoration.

On the northern wall very close to the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, is Ardhanarisvara with three arms; the right half being represented as Śiva and the left as Umā. A *paraśu* is represented in the upper right arm, while the lower is made to rest on the bull standing behind; the only left arms holds a flower. The right part of the figure wears *yañopavīta* and the left a *chhannavīra*; The portion below the right knee, upto the ankle is unfortunately broken and missing. Even the pedestal on the left side is sunk back to obviate the Ardhanari aspect.

The next one is an elegant sculpture of Durga, fascinating for its moulding and charming for its composure. This eight-armed Devi standing on the head of Mahisha holds with the right arms *triśūla*, *chakra*, *khaḍga* and the *abhaya* pose, while with left she holds *sankha*, *chāpa*, shield and the *kaṭyavalambita* pose; a parrot is seated on the hand in *kaṭyavalambita* pose. The Devi wears a *kuchbanda* and *chhannvīra*. The *karaṇḍamakuṭa* on the head, the charming face, the well-treated torso and elegantly proportioned limbs, are unmistakably in the best traditions of early Chola art. On either side of the niche are two persons seated, one on the left cutting off his own head with a sword, evidently offering *navakhaṇḍa*; the one on the right holding an unsheathed sword in his hand. It is interesting to note that the representation of *navakhaṇḍa* offering so boldly represented in Pallava sculptures, continued to linger in the early Chola period also.

Next to this is a graceful sculpture of Bhikshatana with elegant proportions. The God holds a *chauri* at his back with his left upper arm; the other left arm holds a *kapāla*. The upper right arm holds a *ḍamaru* while lower right feeds the antelope, which is so fondly looking up, and standing on its hind legs. Gundodara carrying a vessel is represented on the right side of the niche, while on the left is carved a *rishi patni*.

Bas Reliefs

There are many interesting sculptures in *bas-reliefs*, which are represented inside the *kūḍu* ornaments, in the pilasters and basements, but most of them unfortunately are indistinct due to a thick coating of whitewash. However, some of the very interesting sculptures are visible and deserve mention here. On the south wall, by the side of Nataraja sculpture is represented *Gajasamhāramurti* with eight arms skinning the elephant-headed demon. On the left is represented Parvati. The pilaster in between Nataraja and Ganesa sculptures contains an elegant figure of Vishnu as *Garudarudha*. An Umamahesvara panel is noticed inside the *kūḍu* over the Ganesa sculpture. The fight between Vali and Sugriva is graphically depicted in the pilaster next to the Agastya. The *kūḍu* ornament above the empty niche in the south wall contains a very interesting sculpture representing the visit of Sundaramurti and Cheraman Perumal to Kailāsa. Cheraman is represented as riding a horse in front. Turning his body, he extends his right arm towards Sundara and holding the reins with the left. Sundaramurti is shown seated on an elephant and proceeding towards Kailasa. This panel is graphically portrayed in the painting, found at the Brihadesvara temple of Thanjavur and is very much similar to the sculpture as portrayed here. Evidently, this great episode of Sundaramurti's life was a favourite theme at this period.

Śiva performing *Chaturatāṇḍava* could be noticed in a *bas-relief* above the niche containing Dakshinamurti. Another interesting *bas-relief* is the figure of Chandesanugrahamurti, found on the northern wall. In the same wall is represented Kaliya-Krishna in a small square panel below the Durga and Bhikshatana figures. Another interesting panel is that of the Kiratarjuniya scene, depicting the fight of Kirata and Arjuna. The two elephants encircled by the floral designs on the top of Ardhanari also deserve mention.

Inscriptions

There are altogether eight inscription recorded from the temple. Two of them refer to the gifts of gold for burning lamps by Madurai-

konda Parakesarivarman, evidently, Parantaka I dated in the sixth and thirty-second regnal years respectively. The inscriptions are said to be comparatively modern and are engraved on the outer walls of *maṇḍapa* in front of the shrine; probably these are copies of earlier ones. During the second year of Rajakesarivarman alias Rajaraja is recorded a gift of silver vessels by Udayapirattiar Sembian Madeviar for the merit of Uttamacholdeva. The inscription is recorded on the base of the main shrine and so there could be little doubt as to the existence of the structure before Rajaraja I. Another inscription dated in the seventh regnal year of the same king records the additions to the temple carried out by Sembianmadeviar and the setting up of two images by the same person and records that she presented 234 *kāsu* for daily requirements of the temple and repair. This is evidently a reference to the construction of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* which abuts the *antarāla*, which is confirmed by the architectural details.

The other inscriptions are those of Rajaraja I and Rajendra, recording gifts, etc., made to the temple. When the Great temple at Thanjavur was completed by Rajaraja, he transferred many servants, musicians, dancing girls and others from many temples of his country and in the list is included the Tiru Aranerisvara temple of Tiruvarur.

13

THE SHORE TEMPLE AT MAMALLAPURAM

Mamallapuram was developed as flourishing seaport by the great Pallava monarch, Narasimhavaraman I, and has ever since remained important in the history of south India. A naval fleet was despatched from here, by the same king, to Sri Lanka which was conquered and his vassal, Manavarman, installed on the throne. But above all, the grand conception of Rajasimha in cutting huge boulders of granite into exquisitely carved *rathas* has provided this seaside village with the most attractive and important monuments in India. The free standing monolithic temples called *rathas*, the lavishly sculptured cave-temples and the huge rock-face portraying the sculptures narrating the story or Arjuna obtaining the *pāśupata* situated almost on the seashore, draw the admiration of the world. The charm of the place is enhanced by a temple with two towers, familiarly known as the Shore Temple.

Set against the background of unfathomable sky and the boundless sea, each merging with the other in a far off horizon, with the melody of the waves gently rolling over the outer walls, with the two towers as if piercing the blue canopy of the sky, with their sharp spires and with the green wood in the front welcoming the visitor with a gentle breeze, the Shore Temple has a splendour unsurpassed in aesthetic appeal. With the rising sun spreading its rays like a golden ball, with white clouds moving across, the towers are most fascinating. The temple, standing as it is on the coast for over a thousand years with most of its sculptures having been eroded, due to saline action but leaving vestiges here and there, mere outlines, shines in its pristone glory.

This temple is the most complex group of all the temples of south India, having two shrines placed one behind the other, one facing east and the other west. These two shrines are separated by a rectangular shrine sandwiched in between and having its entrance from the side. This shrine is dedicated to Vishnu, who is represented as lying on his serpent couch and known as Talasayana Perumal. The other two shrines are dedicated to Śiva. There is a large open court at the western end.

A little to the south of the sancta and within the compound is a majestic lion which carries a miniature Mahishasuramardini carved inside a square cavity cut in the neck of the animal. Two attendant deities of the Goddess are shown as mounted on either side of the animal. A little to north of this, in the platform, is an exquisitely carved deer shown with majestic ease. Unfortunately its head is mutilated. In between the deer and the lion could be noticed a dwarf with only the legs preserved.

This temple with triple shrines was built by Narasimhavarman II, familiarly known as Rajasimha. That Rajasimha was a great patron of art, literature and other fine arts is revealed in innumerable titles he assumed for himself like *Vinānārada*. He was a great devotee of Śiva and a prolific temple-builder. Both lithic records and copper plate grants of the Pallavas extol him as one who lavished wealth on temples and scholars. It is to the genius of this monarch that we owe the monumental Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram, and the Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai. An inscription in Pallava grantha characters, in the *balipiṭha* at the western end of the Shore Temple, extols the prowess of Rajasimha.

This temple has been so often visited and illustrated that the very name of the Shore Temple would recall the two towers standing on the shore. However, there is one factor which has escaped attention. The temple originally consisted of three, *vimānas* the third *vimāna* which was over the Vishnu shrine has crumbled down. That these shrines were under regular worship for long is borne out by literature and epigraphs. Thirumangai Āḻvār, who lived in the eighth century

A.D. has sung of the temple and refers to Lord Vishnu as *Kaḍalmallai Talaśayana.* Rajaraja, the great Chola emperor, has left two inscriptions in the temple, recording gifts of lands, etc. Interestingly he mentions the names of the three shrines of at Kshatriyasimha Pallavesvaragriham, Rajasimha Pallavesvaragriham and Pallikondaruḷiya Devar shrine.

As mentioned above, Rajasimha who constructed this temple, was a king of varied tastes and delighted in assuming hundreds of titles, as evidenced from the Kailasanatha temple inscriptions. Amongst his titles, mention may be made of *Rajasimha*, *Narasimha*, *Kshtriyasimha* and *Purushasimha*, as also *Mahamalla*, *Saturmalla*, *Amitramalla*, etc. It is, therefore, evident that the Kshatriyasimha Pallavesvara and Rajasimhapallavesvara mentioned in the inscription are after Rajasimha's titles. A recently discovered label inscription found on the lintel of this Vishnu shrine, in the Pallava grantha script of the Rajasimha age, gives the name of the temple as Narapathisimha Pallava Vishnu griham. This find confirms that the Vishnu temple was also built by Rajasimha. The other reference is to the Talasayana shrine. An inscription of Virarajendra Chola, also found in the temple, refers to this Lord as *Kaḍalmallai Emperumān*.

From the above it is evident that all the three shrines in the temple were under regular worship for a considerable time. It is well-known, that according to the prevalent custom, a temple is placed under worship only when it is crowned with a *vimāna*, and duly consecrated with a *stūpi* (*Kumbhābisheka*). It is, therefore, certain that the Talasayana shrine of the temple had a *vimāna*, which has crumbled. The above conclusion is amply justified by the presence of a course of rectangular and square pavlion ornaments (*bhadraśālas* and *vimāna* types) which formed the first storey of the *vimāna*. This is further proved by the rectangular pavilion ornaments of the other storyes still lying scattered inside the compound. Judging from the extant remains, the *vimāna* was of a rectangular type with a series of *stūpis* arranged in a line on it ridges, and attained a height between those of the big and the small towers.

Though rectangular *vimāna* over the sanctum went out of existence in later times, it was present Pallava days. The monolithic temples of Ganesa and Bhima rathas, both in Mamallapuram, are splendid examples of the rectangular *vimānas*. The Mahendravarmesvaragriha, constructed at the entrance of the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram by Rajasimha's son, a structural example of the rectangular *vimāna* still preserved. The same rectangular structures form the principal form of the gateway towers called *gopuras* in the south Indian temple-complex in the succeeding centuries.

Rajasimha's conception of this temple-complex, with two square *vimānas* interspersed with a rectangular one, each spire from the land's side showing an increase in height and the whole being set against the background of the ocean is indeed a marvel, an inspiration and vision quite befitting a great artist like Rajasimha.

14

THE TEMPLE OF KSHETRAPALA AT TIRUVALANJULI

Tiruvalanjuli, about 6 kilometres from Kumbhakonam, is a village, small in its size and population, but great in its temple. The village is referred to in early inscriptions both as Tiruvalanjuli and Tiruvalainjuli and is said to be in Tirukuḍamukku in the sub-division of Uyyakkondar Valanadu.

The village had its days of glory and subsequent decay. During the time of the Chola monarch, Rajaraja I, it received great attention, but in the middle of the thirteenth century A.D. it was subjected to drought and other calamities. An inscription of Rajaraja III records that the village of Tiruvalanjuli, having become depopulated in course of time, a gift of land was made by the village assembly to Vellai Pilliyar of the temple. The inscription is dated in the fourteenth regnal year of the king. Five years later, the *sabha*, seeing that for a long time the village was subject to many troubles, met in the temple and resolved to exempt temple land from all its taxes. An outbreak of fire in the temple is also recorded. As a result, two walls were damaged. They were subsequently repaired. The village probably never rose to its original splendour after these calamities.

The Kapardisvara temple in this village is considerably big one, and is well-known. A Ganesa in white marble, familiarly known as Vellai Pillaiyar is receiving great worship in modern times. Though it is not possible to say whether the present image is the same mentioned in the inscriptions, it is evident that Vellai Pillaiyar was already in worship during the thirteenth century A.D. Another inscription in the temple records that in the forty-third regnal year of

Kulottunga Chola I one Bhupalan Karunakaran of Orriyur erected the *Parikala Maṇḍapa.* Two dancing girls of the temple gifted lands during the reign of Rajaraja II for providing offerings to Tirunavakkarasudevar, Tiruvadavuradigal and Kannappadevar. The Kapardisvara temple is thus important in many aspects, but a small temple dedicated to Kshetrapala and built within this big temple is the most important of all.

The little shrine is within the compound in a cocoanut grove, immediately to the left of the *gopura.* This was a noble edifice, erected by the chief and pious Queen of Rajaraja I, named Dantisaktivitanki or Lokamahadevi. Many inscriptions are noticed in this shrine. One mentions that this temple of Kshetrapala Pillaiyar was built during the twenty-fifth year of Rajaraja I by Dantisaktivitanki. It also mentions two of Rajaraja's daughters, the elder being Kundavai Nangai, the wife of Vimaliditya. The other is the middle daughter, Madevadigal. Vimaladitya was an Eastern Chalukyan prince and it will be interesting to recall the reasons for this matrimonial alliance between the Cholas and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi.

Saktivarman, the Vengi king was a contemporary of Rajaraja I, but he was kept away from his throne by a younger line for over twenty-seven years. He sought Rajaraja's help to recover his kingdom and as a result Rajaraja intervened in the affairs of Vengi. Vengi was conquered and Saktivarman was installed on the throne. To keep Vengi in perpetual allegiance to the Cholas, Rajaraja thought it prudent to give his daughter, Kundavai, to Vimaladitya, the younger brother of Saktivarman. Their son was named Rajaraja, who married Ammangadevi, the daughter of Rajendra Chola I. Their son was the famous Kulottunga I. This temple-inscription is important as it mentions Kundavai as the wife of Vimaladitya.

Another inscription in this shrine is of great religious importance for it throws valuable light on the general mode of worship prevalant in the Tamil country in the eleventh century A.D. It mentions offerings being made three times a day (*muchchandi*),

annointing the deity with oil on wednesdays and Saturdays, offerings to the God, foodstuffs as such *Tayir amudu*, *Aḍaiyamudu*, *Appamudu* and *Sarkaraiyamudu*.

This temple is one of a few dedicated to Kshetrapala. It is embellished with sculptures of exquisite beauty. Its architecture is restrained, but its sculptural wealth is splendid. Like the great temple at Thanjavur, it is built of granite with niches carrying sculpture, representing various aspects of Śiva. Its superstructure, in contrast to the Thanjavur *vimāna*, is in the form of a hemispherical dome and is built of brick and mortar.

But its present state of preservation is not quite satisfactory. No worship is being offered now. Its *mukha maṇḍapa* and *Mahā-maṇḍapa* have crumbled, pulling down and mutilating some exceptionally beautiful sculptures. The *vimāna* is completely obscured by an outcrop of shrubs and plants. The granite slabs are disintegrating and with them the inscriptions of historical and religious importance. Around could be noticed some masterpieces of south Indian art badly mutilated and scattered. The temple is in ruins now and some of sculptures have been removed to the Tanjore Art Gallery.

Yet, in the centre of the *garbhagriha* stands the Kshetrapala Pillaiyar, majestic in appearance, but as a silent witness to these destructions. It is the most thrilling sculpture of Kshetrapala that one could see. It is vigorous in its treatment and perfect in modelling and exhibits great care and attention with which the sculpture was carved and installed by the devout queen. The deity is eight armed—two of its arm are broken—carrying bow, arrow, bell, drum, trident and sword and is about 152 cm in height. Its hair is depicted as standing erect on its edges and the face is full of divine charm. The figure is installed on a *yonipiṭha* which has a cut-way to allow the *abhisheka* liquids to drain away. An exact replica of this image, also of the same age and perhaps the work of the same artist, could be seen to the right of the steps leading to the *mukha-maṇḍapa* of the Rajarajesvara temple of Thanjavur.

Both Rajaraja and his queen, Lokamahadevi, were greatly devoted to this lord. They gave lands and gold for the upkeep of the temple. They performed *tulābhāra* and *hiraṇyagarbha* respectively at Tiruvisalur and sent two of the gold flowers as offerings to this Lord. Their daughters, Kundavai and Madevadigal, gifted a gold *face* with *urdhvakesa* embedded with a face band studded with gems. Many other ornaments of gold were also gifted by them. Rajendra, in the third year of his reign, offered two golden lotuses at the feet of this Lord. The shrine of Kshetrapala of Tiruvalanjuli, though moderate in dimensions, is important in its historic, religious, architectural and artistic content.

15

THE TEMPLE OF ARAPPALISVARA

Situated in a picturesque surrounding on the top of the Kolli Hills, the Arappalisvara temple, dedicated to Lord Śiva and Goddess Tayambal is an ancient temple, sung by the *Devaram* Saints. The Kolli hill itself is famous from the beginning of the Christian era for a beautiful sculpture of *Pāvai*, often referred to in early *Sangam* literature as *Kollippavai*. Many verses in the *Sangam* collections speak of the beauty and auspicious nature of these sculptures which is said to be found on the rock, west of a stream on the top of the hills. A sculpture is now identified as *Kollipavai* but it seems to be an image of Kali of the Chola period. The Kolli hills was under the control of a chieftain in the beginning from Christian era whose name is given as Malavan. It was also ruled by one of the seven great donors, Valvil Ori who is praised for his munificent gifts to bards and ministrels. Recently a statue of the chieftain has been placed on the top of the hills to commemorate this great hero.

The Arappalisvara temple is situated on the banks of a river which has a perenniel flow with two water falls, one a few kilometres away falling to a depth of over 30.5 m and another very near the temple where there is a fall of about 3m in height. From time immemorial, this Śiva temple has been held in high veneration by a Śaivite saint and his followers and is one of the foremost sacred *sthalas* in the Kongu country. The present structure goes back to the period of the early Cholas. Number of inscriptions found on the walls of the temple records dedications to Lord Siva and his consort during the reigns of Uttama Chola (late 10th century A.D.), Rajaraja I, Rajadhiraja, Rajamahendra and Kulottunga Chola. One of the donors is the famous Chola queen Sembiyanmahadevi, the queen

of Gandaraditya the mother of Uttama Chola. She is the daughter of a Malavaraiya Chieftain. She has paid a visit to this temple climbing the steep hills and has gifted 100 *kaḻanjus* of gold for various services in the temple. An interesting record in the temple of Kulottunga Chola assigns lands on the top of the hills for various services to the temple which were originally gifted in the time of one of his predecessors, Rajamahendra around A.D. 1060. The present *Amman* shrine was built and the image of *Devi* erected later. Architecturally this is a very fine structure and the sculpture of the *Devi* enshrined in the sanctum is real gem of sculptural art of the period. During the year 1823 a *Kumhābisheka* (consecration) was performed to this temple and both the *kalaśas* of the temple of Lord Arappalisvara and the goddess were guiled with gold. So it is seen from the temple records that the temple continued to occupy a very important role on the top of the hill right through the centuries till very recent times.

The Kolli hills is also the residing place of a tribe called Malaiyala Goundar. They speak Tamil, but are hill tribes, who have their own customs and manners and have been a subject of study by social anthropologists. They are hard working, loveable people who are greatly devoted to Lord Arappalisvara on the hills. Particularly in the month of *Āḍi* and *Thai* they visit the temple and offer special worship to Arappalisvara. The Kolli hills is also known for medicinal herbs grown in plenty which are used both by *ayurvedic* and *siddha* medical practitioners. According to the *sthalapurana* the Kolli hills was inhabited by saints and sages in ancient times, particularly by *siddhas*.

Archaeological evidences point to the existence of *Jaina* followers in various parts of the hills. The Kolli hills consists of a row of tall hills with a central valley and is often called as Chaturagiri. There is a ghat road laid in 1963 to reach the village Semmedu on the top of the hill. It takes nearly an hour to reach the village from the foot of the hills. As one assends the hill, the picturesque surrounding, valleys and the green vegetation offer as much attraction to

the tourists as Kodai Hills or Udagai hills. It can be reached now from Salem in about two hours time, *via* Rasipuram.

The Arappalisvara temple can also be reached from the Trichchi side. One can go up by bus up to a place called Puliyancholai and then climb up the hill for about 5 kilometres. From the village Semmedu, the Arappaliseara temple is about 8 kilometres and a modern road is available for jeeps and cars to go.

The Kolli hill is veritable haunt for religious followers, archaeologists, historians social anthorpologists and tourists. An interesting inscription in the Arappalisvara temple assignable to eleventh century A.D. refers to the existence of a highway leading down the hill named Amsittur Irangina Peruvali. Obviously these places were well-connected with the roads during the Chola period.

16

MELAPPERUMPALLAM BRONZES

Melapperumbalam is a small, but impressive, village near Kaveripattinam. An old Śiva temple in this village is interesting for its metal image and inscriptions.

The temple is a *kaṟṟaḷi*, *i.e.*, a stone structure with beautiful pilasters. Though small, it is impressive. The *devakoshtas* are adorned with image of deities like Durga, Ganesa and Dakshinamurti, usually noticed in the temples of this period. On the southern wall of the sanctum, on the outer side, is carved a figure of *Śivalinga* and two devotees are shown one on either side in *anjali* pose. By the side of it is an inscription which records that the stone temple was built by a certain Tiruvidi Tiruvalampura Nambi or Kaḷumalamuḍaiyān Āḷudaiyān Piḷḷaiyashvan, evidently the person to the right of the *linga* is the builder. The main deity is referred to as Tiruvalampuramudaiar in inscriptions.

There are many inscriptions engraved on the walls of the temple, the earliest of which is recorded in the fifth regnal year of the Chola king Vikrama Chola. It records a sale of land of eight persons to the temple of Tiruvalampuriudaiyar in Talachchangadu in Akkurnadu, a sub-division of Jayamkondachola Valanadu, by a certain Kavakasi Kalaiyan Kumaran or Tambiran Tolan. There are many inscriptions dated in the reign of Vikrama Chola recording sale of lands to the temple. Evidently the temple was built in the time of Vikrama Chola early in his reign.

An inscription in the sixth year of Vikrama Chola (*Kartigai, suklapaksha*, *dvadasi*, Wednessay, *Sadaiyam*) registers a gift by

purchase of about 2½ *veli* of land by a certain Velan Gandaradittan of Alangudi in Velanadu, a sub-division of Kullottunga Chola Valanadu, for the worship of the images of Kuttadumdevar and his consort Tiruppalliyaraippirattiar, set up by him in the temple. He also got the taxes on the land remitted by a cash payment of seventy *kasu* to the assembly, *Mulapparushai*, which held its sittings in the Mummudichola porrambalam. Another inscription, also of the same reign, records a sale of land made tax free by some private individuals of Marachcheri in Akkurnadu to the temple to provide for worship and offerings to the images of Kuttadumdevar and Tadanganninachchiar set up in the temple by Velan Gandaradittar. Evidently both the records refer to the same deities set up by Gandaradittan.

That Kuttadumdeva refers to Nataraja is well-known. This probably refers to the beautiful Nataraja image now in worship in the same temple. It is interesting to note that an image of Nataraja and his consort were unearthed in the same village as treasure trove finds some years back and they are now in the Government Museum Madras. They are also ascribed to the period of Vikrama Chola.

Another inscription of Rajakesari Varman a Tribhuvanachakravarti (Rajadhiraja II) dated in his twelfth year records a tax free gift by the *mulaparushai* of some lands to the temple for worship and offerings to the images of certain deities set up in the eighth year by a native of Memalaipalaiyanur in Jayangondacholamandalam. This probably refers to Kiratamurti and Bhikshatana now in the temple.

There is also a beautiful image of Surya in stone in this temple. An image called Dakshinaraja, together with his consort, is now in the temple. The image is two armed, standing in the *ālīdha* pose over a lotus pedestal on a *bhadrapiṭha*. On both the legs the image wears sandals. The lower garment is short with sharp protruding edges. The left arm is raised in the pose of holding a bow and the right is in the *kaṭaka* pose to hold an arrow. The arm band is made of beads and is particularly interesting. An elbow ornament made

of beads is also noticed. The pronouced belly has a depression at the navel. Instead of an *upavīta*, a *chhannavīra* adorns the body. The face is shown with beard and moustache. Big *patrakuṇḍalas* adorn the earlobes. The forehead is short and the hair is tied in the rustic fashion.

The accompanying figure of the goddess is a charming one with a lovely face and with its hairdo in the *dammilla* fashion. The earlobes are elongated, but are devoid of ornamentation. The right arm is in the *lolahasta* pose, and the left in the *kaṭaka*. The arm-band is well-treated. The well-rounded breasts and the narrow waist are adorned by a *chhannavīra*. The tight fitting lower garment extending below the knees is heldup at the waist with a well-worked lion-headed clasp.

Though the image is locally called Dakshinaraja, it represents Śiva as Kiratamurti with his consort Uma, on a comparison with the *kiratārjunīya* panel in the *gopura* of the Thanjavur temple. This tower was built by Rajaraja's general, Krishnan Raman or Mummudi Chola Brahmamarayan, during the reign of Rajaraja himself and was called Rajan Rajan Tiruvasal, the sacred entrance of Rajaraja. The sculptures are evidently the work of Rajaraja's artists, though the panels have been reset during recent renovations. The panel consists of Śiva entering the forest as a *kirata* with his consort, Arjuna's penance, the wild animals including the boar, the fight between the *Kirata* and Arjuna and the finale, Śiva seated in Kailasa with Parvati and presenting the *pasupatāstra* in the form of a *gaṇa* to Arjuna who stands in an attitude of devotion. Thus this panel represents the complete episode. The central panel depicting the fight of the *kirata* with Arjuna is particularly interesting since the stature of the *kirata* is almost identical with that of present metal image. Both the *hunters* have the hair tied in rustic style, the pronounced belly, the short lower garment and do not have *upavīta*. The metal image has a *chhannavīra* and is bearded. Otherwise they are identical. Thus it is probable that the present metal image is a representation of the *Kirata* and his consort Uma. In general portraits, kings and queens are depicted in an attitude of devotion and not as

is in this figure. To bearded *Kirata* is not uncommon. The murals depicting this scene at Lepakshi, the Kirata is shown with a beard.

That *Kirata* images were made in copper and consecrated in temples is well attested by the inscriptions at the Great Temple of Thanjavur itself. An inscription dated in the sixth regnal year of Rajendra Chola I (A.D. 1022-1044), the son of Rajaraja I, records that the Minister, Udaya Divakaram Tillaiyaliyar or Rajaraja Muvenda Velar, a native of Kanchi vayil, deposited thirteen *kaśu* for the sacred food and other requirements of the image Kiratarjuniya devar which he had set up. In another inscription dated in the 10th regnal year of the same king the deity is mentioned as Kiratarjuna devar.

Notable examples of *Kirata* in metal are the ones from Tiruvetkalam, Radha Narasimhapuram and other places. But in none of these examples is Śiva shown with beard. This is the only example noticed so far where Śiva is shown with a beard and with all the attributes of a *Kirata*.

The dating of the image is made comparatively easy by the study of the temple in which it is now under worship. The temple is an all stone structure (*kaṟṟaḷi*), built by Tiruvidi Tiruvalampuranambi or Kalumalamudaiyan Aludaiyan Pillaiyashvan. A portrait of the builder is on a wall of the temple. The earliest inscription in the temple is dated in the fifth regnal year of the Chola king, Vikrama (1118-1135). Evidently the temple was built around that time. Another inscription in the sixth year of the same king records a gift of land by a certain Velan Gandaradittan of Alangudi for the worship of the images of Kuttadumdevar and his consort, Tiruppalliyarai pirattiar set up by him in the temple. That the term *Kuttadumdevar* refers to Nataraja image is well-known.

There is one beautiful image of Nataraja now under worship in the same temple which may be ascribed to the beginning of the 12th century (the period of the construction of the temple) on stylistic grounds. Another image of Nataraja with his consort was unearthed in the same village and is now in the Madras Government Museum.

This group is also dated to the same period on stylistic grounds. The Nataraja set up by Velan Gandarattittan may be either of the two; in all probability the one under worship in the temple. On a comparision with these figures, the image of Kiratamurti may also be assigned to the same period.

There is also an excellent Bhikshatanamurti, standing in *tribhanga* with a lovely deer jumping up to his extended right arm, and a short and stout *bhutagaṇa* carrying a plate on his head standing to the left of the image. The upper left arm probably held a *triśūla* across the back. The other two arms are in the pose of holding and playing upon the *vina*, which makes the image the most charming and unique figure of Bhikshatanamurti noticied so far in south India. The charming face, gracefully bent to the left, suggests that the beautiful Lord is completely engrossed in *Viṇā nāda*. No other Bhikshatana image is so far noticed playing upon the *vina*. Another rare feature of this image is that it is clothed at the waist, while most of the images of Bhikshatana are shown naked. There are a few Chola examples where similar representations are shown clothed. The left leg of the present deity is placed firmly on the ground and the right is slightly bent, suggestive of moving round.

An inscription of Rajakesarivarman Rajadhiraja II, dated in his 12th year (A.D. 1178) records a gift of land for offerings, etc., to the images of deities set up in the eighth year by a native of Menmalaipalaiyanur. The image is referred to in the inscription as *Vattanaigal pada naḍanta nāyakar*. The designation of a deity by they above name is unique, not met with in *āgama* and *śilpa* texts and could not be identified. It was in the hymns of saint Appar that I could get a reference to this term. What is more, the hymn is addressed to the presiding deity of Melapperumpallam itself. The village was then known as Tiruvalampuram. Appar in the seventh century has given a graphic description of Lord Śiva with a captivating smile on His face, carrying a *vina* in his arm and moving around as Bhikshatana.

The verses of Appar have almost been taken as the *dhyanaśloka* for making this image of Vinadhara Bhikshatana. The term *Vattanigal pada naḍantu* is significant. It helps us in identifying this image with the image referred to in the inscription as *Vattanaigal pada naḍantanāyakar*. Thus this image is the one set up in the twelfth year of Rajadhiraja II. It joins the list of the few dated bronzes of south India.

17

SOME BRONZES FROM THANJAVUR TEMPLE

Thanjavur is well-known as the capital of the Chola rulers who were holding sway over the entire part of the southern country from 9th century A.D. to 13th century A.D., for four hundred years. It is here that Rajaraja, the illustrious Chola monarch built the Rajarajesvara temple, which is a masterpiece of Indian temple architecture. Fortunately it is still well-preserved with all its sculptural beauty. Thanjavur is the most fertile district of the Tamil country and plays a vital role in the supply of food grains to the people. The rise of this city into prominence will, therefore, be particularly interesting for the study of south Indian history.

Though Thanjavur was the capital of the Imperial Cholas of the Vijayalaya line from about the 9th century, it was not the capital of the Cholas of the *Sangam* age, whose rule is placed at the beginning of the Christian era. According to the mythological ancestry of the Cholas, one Kandan, a contemporary of Agastya and Parasurama, entrusted his kingdom to his Kakandan, in order to escape the wrath of Parasurama. He ruled from Champa, which later on came to be called Kakandi, Puhar and Kaveripumpattinam. Thus Kaveripumpattinam seems to be the earliest capital of the Cholas.

Karikala, who was the greatest Chola monarchs of the *Sangam* age, seems to have had his capital at Kaveripumpattinam. It is well-known that he was responsible for ushering in a glorious era by promoting agriculture and commerce. He raised embankments on either side of Kaveri along its course and was the first king who conceived the idea of an *anicut* (stone dam) across the Kaveri. Kallanai, now called the Grand Anicut, is his glorious creation.

During his reign Kaveripumpattinam played a vital role and is vividly described in the *Paṭṭinappālai*.

A rival branch of the Chola family is mentioned as ruling a part of the country with Uraiyur as its capital. Nalangilli, a son of Karikala, had his capital at Puhar and his rival Nedungilli ruled from Uraiyur. A battle ensued between these two rivals in which Nalangilli emerged victorious and Nedungilli was put to death at the battle of Kariyaru. Another illustrious name of the *Sangam* age, is Kochengannan who inflicted a crushing defeat on the Chera king Kanaikkal Irumporai. He was a great Śaivite, who is said to have built a good number of temples to Śiva and is praised by Tirugñana-sambandar, Tirumangai and Sundaramurti. His capital seems to be Uraiyur. Uraiyur as the capital of the Cholas has been sung in many poems of the *Sangam* age. Evidently as an inland capital it had many advantages over Kaveripumpattinam which was essentially a seaport. Military strategy, seems to be an important factor for such a shift in its importance. This Uraiyur is none other than the modern town of the same name, situated on the southern bank of the Kaveri, within the city limits of Tiruchchirappalli. That Uraiyur continued to be the capital city of the Cholas is borne out by later inscriptions.

During the beginning of the seventh century A.D. the Cholas lost all their eminence and were practically sandwiched between the rising powers of the Pandyas in the south and the imperial Pallavas in the north and were literally non-existent as a power, but for their name. The Pallava king Simhavishnu, the father of Mahendra I, swept over the Chola country and seems to have captured their capital. That Uraiyur, was directly under the Pallavas is brone out by another factor. The upper rock-cut cave at Tiruchchirappalli bearing the name of Śatrumallesvaralaya, was excavated by Mahendra I, who has left his inscription there. The inscription refers to the mountain as that of the Chola Country. It also refers to the wealth of the Chola country as being seen from the top of the mountain. It is evident that the capital was Uraiyur and the

inscription of Mahendra I was almost in the heart of the Chola kingdom.

The Pallava rule was at its zenith during the period of Narasimha I, the conqueror of Vatapi and Ceylon. But during the rule of his successor Paramesvara I, the Chalukya king Vikramaditya I invaded South, in order to avenge the ransack of Vatapi. His march was successful and he penetrated into the Chola country. While camping at Uragapura on the south bank of Kaveri in the Chola country, Vikramaditya issued a grant. Soon Paramesvara mustered all his strength and defeated Vikramaditya at Peruvalanallur and sent him back to his country and probably followed him as far as Vatapi. That this part of the country was directly under the Pallava rule, till the end of their supremacy is brone out from the inscription of Tellarerinda Nandi Pottarsar at Koviladi village, which is about a few kilometres away from Thiruchchirappalli, though it has gone over to the Pandyas at times. Till this period Uraiyur was the attraction for all the kings. There seem to be no reference to Thanjavur till this time.

Only at the beginning of the eighth century, we come acorss references to Thanjavur, interestingly not as the capital of the Cholas but as a city, which was ruled by a line of powerful chieftains called Muttaraiyars. Some of the Muttaraiyars appear in the records of the later Pallavas as well as in the records of the Pandya king, Maranjadaiyan. Their capital was Nemam near Sendalai; there is an interesting inscription of a Muttaraiyar Chieftain, which mentions three generations of the king. This king named Suvaran Maran, alias Perumbidugu Muttraiyan is mentioned in the record as Tanjaiar Kon, the lord of Thanjavur. He is also referred to as Kalavarkalavan and Tanjai Narpugalalan. The inscription also refers to a poet's name Tanjai Tiram Padinar and mentions bards "who remain singing on the state of Tanjai appearing in the midst of fields ever filled with water. To cause destruction to the Pandyas and cause success to the Pallavas Mara, advanced that day to the battle". Evidently Maran fought on the side of the Pallavas.

Tirumangai mannan, the great Vaishnavite saint, is said to be the contemporary of Nandivarman Pallavamalla. In his songs of *Divyaprabandham*, he sings the praise of a Vishnu temple of Tanjavur as *Tanjai Mamaṇikovil*, (*Vembulam solai māmadil Tanjai Mamaṇikovilai*[14] *vaṇangi*). The same temple is referred to by him, as Tanjai Kovil and Tanjai Alai. This may be placed about A.D. 750.

Landmark

The Muttaraiyar chieftains seem to have changed their allegiance to either the Pallavas or the Pandyas according to the success gained in the battle. Thus we find them as feudatories of the Pandya king Varaguna in the middle of 9th century A.D. Vijayalaya the founder of the Imperial Chola line and who was in all probability a feudatory of the Pallava king, captured Thanjavur and conquered the Muttaraiyar chieftains. This was a signal victory, which not only gave rise to the Imperial Cholas but also raised the status of Thanjavur. The conquest of Thanjavur by Vijayalaya is an important landmark in the history of Tamil Nadu. It is vividly described in all the subsequent records of the Cholas.

The Tiruvalangadu copper charter of Rajendra Chola I, mentioning the event states that, "He (Vijayala) of the solar race, took possession of the town Tanchapuri, which was picturesque to the sight, was as beautiful as Alaka, the chief town of Kubera, had reached the sky by its high turrets and the white wash of mansions, just as he would seize by the hand, his own wife, who had beautiful eyes, graceful curls, a cloth covering her body and sandal paste as white as lime in order to sport with her. Having next consecrated there the image of Nisumbhasudani, whose lotus feet are worshipped by gods and demons, he by the grace of that Goddess, bore just as easily as a garland, the weight of the whole earth resplendent with her garment of the four oceans." The Kanyakumari inscription of Virarajendra goes a step further and states that "The King Vijayalaya constructed in the Chola country a town named Tanchapuri with all the advantages of a new city; praised by Gods such as Brahma seated on the lotus flower."

It is, therefore, evident that Thanjavur was captured by Vijayalaya who enlarged and fortified the city and consecrated his favourite deity Nisumbhasudani. Thus, we find Thanjavur becoming the capital of the Cholas for the first time.

An image of Nisumbhasudani now under worship in Thanjavur town is of historic interest. The eight-armed seated image, about 184 cm in height, is wielding a trident in the main right arm and points to the retreating demon with the main left. Other arms carry various emblems among which a *kapāla* in the left arm is noteworthy. The Devi is shown as an emaciated skeletal figure with her head slightly thrown back and with a grim look, piercing the *asura*. The head of Nisumbha is trampled under her right foot and his brother Sumbha, though vigorously defending himself with a sword and shield, is fleeing unsuccesfully. The other subordinates of the *asura* brothers have also been brought under her seat. The figure of the goddess is illustrative of *built-in* power in revolt, exerting every nerve to overpower the formidable opponents and establish the rule of glory. The demons under her feet though very much alive are aware of their helplessness against the supreme valour of the Goddess, and are suggestive of the waning power of the opponents. The very first impression one gets on seeing this sculpture is that here is a royal icon replete with the potentialities of yielding a thrill and joy to the spectator. The sculpture from its style is neither Pallava nor Muttaraiyan, who were masters of Thanjavur for a considerable time, but has the qualities of a Chola idiom in its emerging state. Further it is a rare sculptural representation not to be seen either in the Chola land or in other parts of the Tamil country. The sculpture is to be dated to the middle of the ninth century. It is of interest to recall here the establishment of the line of the Imperial Cholas at Thanjavur by Vijayalaya in about A.D. 850. The Cholas are described as one of the crowned rulers of the Tamil country, in the beginning of the Christian era, but gradually were thrown into oblivion by the Pallavas in the north and the Pandyas in the south, the Chola country becoming the battlefield for supremacy between these

two powers. From the sixth to the ninth century nothing is heard of the Chola dynasty.

Vijayalaya, a Chola by descent, wanted to tear open the veil of obscurity for his dynasty by casting away the overbearing power of the Pallavas and the Pandyas. It was no easy task and he had to face these formidable opponents with grim determination and an iron will. He achieved this aim with great success and signalled the emergence of his dynasty by capturing Thanjavur, and in no time the dynasty rose to such eminence that for nearly four hundred years, it remained the supreme power in the South—supreme not only in its victories but also in its administrative thoroughness, architectural achievements, and sculptural splendour.

It was such aspirations that Vijayalaya sought to represent in the image of Nisumbhasudani which he installed at Thanjavur immediately on his victory. Undoubtedly it ought to have been a great image, portraying the magnificent personality of the ruler who installed it reflecting not only the conditions of the time, but also the culmination of his achievements.

The Tiruvalangadu copper plates of Rajendra I, mention that Vijayalaya captured Thanjavur, installed the goddess Nisumbhasudani and ruled the country with her blessings. The reason for choosing the Goddess Nisumbhasudani is obvious. According to the *Devī-mahātmya*, the worship of this Devi stirs terror in the minds of the opponents in the battlefields and brings victory to the king. Vijaya-laya had this in his mind when he chose Nisumbhasudani as his fevourite deity. Perhaps there was another reason as well for this choice. The Pallavas were great patrons of Durga as Mahishasura-mardini. In all their foundations, not only temples but also village settlements, the emphasis was laid on Durga Mahishamardini. Vijayalaya wanted to strike a note of individuality in his creation. It may be noted that the cult of Bhadrakali (The Devi as the destroyer of Sumbha and Nisumbha is popularly called Bhadrakali) gains pro-minence only from Vijayalaya's time.

The image is now worshipped as Vadabhadrakali in Thanjavur. The portrayal of its tremendous striking power, the grim expression

on its face, its great size, the lively depiction of the *asuras* under her seat, the presence of Nisumbha's head below her feet and the rarity of such a sculptural representation, make us feel that this is the image of Nisumbhasudani installed by Vijayalaya in Thanjavur.

Vijayalaya's son Aditya, ruled for sometime as a feudatory of the Pallava king, Nripatunga. The Pallava king, Aparajita, aided by his ally, the Ganga King Prithvipati fought with the opposing army of the Pandya king, Varaguna and probably with Chola Aditya. Though the Ganga King Prithvipati lost his life in the battle, the Pandya forces were utterly routed by Aparajita, which marked the downfall of the Pandya empire in the South. Sripurambiyam is the modern Tiruppurambiyam near Kumbhakonam.

But soon after, Aditya consolidated his power and killed Aparajita as he was marching on his elephant. This event marked the downfall of the great Pallava empire on the north. Aditya soon led a victorious expedition into the heart of Tondainadu and probably conquered Kanchi. One of Aditya's inscriptions is found at Tirukkalukunram not far away from the Pallava capital. Aditya also seems to have ruled from Thanjavur.

By about A.D. 1000 the great *Vimāna* of the Brihadisvara temple was rising in its glory under the orders of Rajaraja I as also the greatness of Thanjavur. The city became the centre of great cultural activity and was enlarged on well-laid out plans. A study of Rajaraja's inscription reveals the names of many streets, shopping centres, etc., of Thanjavure.

It will be interesting to locate the original seat of the great city. From the modern town of Thanjavur on the way to Tiruvaiyaru is the river Vennar, which forms the outskirits of Thanjavur. On the southern bank of the river, which is called the bank of Vennar (*Veṇṇaṛṛangarai*) is the Vishnu temple celebrated in the hymns of Tirumangai Alvar as Tanjaimāmaṇikovil. Rajaraja also refers to Thanjaimāmaṇikovil from where he transferred some servants to the Great temple. There is a small Śiva temple in the place which seems to have undergone extensive renovation as a result of which no

inscription is found on the temple. However, there are number of sculptures, which are coeval with the sculptures of the Great temple of Thanjavur and may be ascribed to the beginning of 11th century A.D. They are well-proportioned, gracefully modelled and retain the splendour of the early Chola sculptures in their flexions and beauty. Particularly interesting are the sculptures of Durga in a delightful *tribhanga* pose, Brahma in ecstatic ease and a sculpture of Nataraja portrayed in great rhythm. Amongst stone sculptures, of Nataraja so far noticed, this sculpture is undoubtedly a fine creation. The Lord of this temple is called Tanchapurisvara. The existence of Tanjaimāmaṇikovil and the Tanchapurisvara temple, together with the fact that Thanjavur received extension in the south, seems to suggest that the original seat of this city was located on the southern bank of Vennar. This almost corresponds to the description of Tanjai in Sendalai inscription of Perumbidugu Muttaraiyan, as being surrounded by paddy fields all found.

THANJAI ALAGAR

Thanjavur is the most illustrious name for the student of south Indian history, for it contains the lofty *vimāna* of the great Rajarajesvara temple now called Brihadisvara. The temple carries exquisitely carved sculptures of Śiva, in various poses, and is one of the magnificent achievements in the temple building activity of the whole country. The *Śivalinga* in the sanctum and the Nandi at the open court are unique in their size and volume. The deity is referred to as Rajarajasvaramudiar in inscriptions. The entire treasury of Rajaraja, which was always overflowing with presents of gold, silver, and precious gems, brought by the vassal kings, was emptied and lavished to make this monumental temple unparallelled in the history of the nation.

The temple was endowed with vessels made of gold, silver, copper and other metals. Many metal images of gold, brass and copper were gifted, which were worshipped and carried in processions on festive days. Countless jewellery made of gold and set with very precious gems were presented to these deities. There are over

forty such images mentioned in inscriptions, which were set up either by Rajaraja, his sister, queens or lieutenants. But nothing is known at present about these images, the ornaments, etc. Whether these magnificent and pious gifts, destroyed and wiped out of existence, or were all these unfortunately melted for their base metal value, or have they been stealthily removed to far off places or do they still lie buried under some corner of the temple, it is not possible to say at the present moment. Nothing is known so far and no piece could be definitely attributed as coeval with the temple.

However, their is one image, which may be mentioned here as an interesting specimen. It represents a copper image of standing Śiva with four arms. The usual emblems of Siva are noticed in the upper pair of arms while the lower pair is either in the pose of playing *vina* or holding bow and arrow. The right leg is placed steadily on the lotus pedestal and the left is bent and placed on the dwarf who is shown at the feet. It is accompanied by the figure of Uma as well. This image of Śiva according to *Āgamic* description may represent either Vinadhara Dakshinamurti or Tripurantaka-murti. Since it is accompanied by the consort Uma, it cannot be identified as Vinadhara, for in the Vinadhara aspect, Uma is not associated with Śiva. Therefore, it may be taken to be the representation of Tripurantaka. This group was originally in the Great temple at Thanjavur and is now in the Tanjore Art Gallery.

As stated earlier there are a good number of images mentioned in inscriptions, said to have been set up in the temple, which include various representations of Śiva as Kalyanasundara, Vrishbhavahana, Ardhanari, Dakshinamurti, Kiratamurti, Bhikshatana and others. Even rare representations such as Lingapuraṇadeva were said to have been made of copper and set up in the temple. But significantly there is no mention of Vinadhara or Tripurantaka in inscriptions, so far noticed. However, an inscription in the temple records that before the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Rajarajadeva, his queen Panchavan Mahadevi set up copper images of Śiva, His wife Umaparamesvari and their son Ganapati, to which she presented a number of valuable ornaments.

"One solid image bearing the sacred name of Thanjai Alagar, having four divine arms of measuring two *muḷam* and four *viral* height from head to foot, including, the image of Musalagan who was under the bent foot on which the God stood. One solid image of his consort Umaparameswari measuring one *muḷam* and three quarters, two *viral* and a half in height from head to foot." The above description exactly corresponds to the bronze under study.

THE TRIPURANTAKA

It is interesting to note here that the base of the Thanjavur *vimāna* carries two courses of niches the lower one carries figures of Śiva in various aspects, as Dakshinamurti, Ardhanari, etc. But the upper course of niches carry the same forms resembling each other. This represents the figure of Tripurantakamurti mentioned in *āgamas*. It is, therefore, evident that Rajaraja was so enamoured of the Tripurantaka aspect that he represented the same over and over again. Even the most beautiful mural in the temple, painted under order of Rajaraja, depicts Śiva as Tripurantakamurti. It is, therefore, evident that Rajaraja enthusiastically named the figure of Tripurantakamurti as Thanjai Alagar, the beautiful lord of Thanjavur, his beloved capital. The present bronze figure is probably the same Thanjai Alagar set up by Rajaraja in Thanjavur temple and referred to in the inscriptions.

I had occasion to notice an inscription on the pedestal of the Nataraja image in the temple. It was also observed that the image of Nataraja has undergone repairs. The inscriptions is on the original pedestal in modern Nagari characters and is in four lines. It reads, "Under orders of the queen Kamakshi, the wife of king Sivaji, her agent Nagaraja repaired the worn out image of Nataraja, in the temple of Bridadisvara, in the *Salivahana* Saka 1807 (A.D. 1885) equivalent to *Tarana*, on a full-moon day which fell on a Tuesday and reconsecrated the image."

From other inscriptions found in this temple, as well as elsewhere, we know that queen Kamakshi Bamba Bai was the chief queen of the Maratha king Śivaji of Thanjavur and that she was in

charge of all the Thanjavur temples and was responsible for carrying out extensive renovations to temples in and around Thanjavur. Pandit Nagaraja Ramaji was her agent for this purpose and under her orders carried out many renovations. At her instance, he constructed an *ardhamaṇḍapa* in the temple of Rajagopalaswamy inside the Fort, and consecrated Sri Satprabhavasivendra Sarasvati Svami as well as the Shodasabhuja Chakrapani (the sixteen-armed Chakrapani image).

The Nagari inscription on the pedestal of Nataraja referred to above, makes it clear that the present image of Nataraja was repaired under the orders of queen Kamakshi. It is thus evident that an old worn out image of Nataraja was lying in the temple requiring repairs and that it was in fact repaired and reconsecrated. The pedestal of the image under discussion has been repaired on either side. The *prabha* has also been repaired from the pedestal up to the middle. Thus the upper part of the circular *prabha* is original while the lower part on either side has been recast. The inscription is found on the original portion of the pedestal. At the junction of the old *prabha* and the new addition, a *makara* motif is introduced. One can easily perceive the difference in the metals of the original and new parts of the *prabha*. The original is fine copper, while the repaired portion seems to be *panchaloha*. The difference in the treatment of flames of the *prabha* may also be noted. The leg placed on the back of the dwarf (Muyalagan) is also broken at the ankle and has been repaired. The artist who carried out this repair has cleverly introduced a snake curling around the ankle thus hiding the repaired portion. That the snake was not part of the original image can be seen from its crude workmanship and difference in the quality of the metal. No snake is noticed at the ankle in most Nataraja images. Since the inscription is specific about repairs to this image, and since the repairs are evident, there can be no doubt that the image is the original one belonging to the temple and being in need of repairs was lying in the temple without being worshipped. According to the *Manasara* repairs are permitted to metal image other than to the face and the body. The repairs carried out in the present case are to

comparatively unimportant parts of the icon and the main image still retains all its original splendour. It is a perfect image of Nataraja and in all probability is of the age of Rajaraja who built the Great temple to which it belongs.

It is necessary here to mention that in the inscription of Rajaraja I, the term Nataraja is not mentioned. It is referred to as *Āḍavallān*—'Master dancer'. The term *Āḍavallān* is not an innovation of Rajaraja I. Apparaswamigal, the contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendravarman (A.D. 600-630) and Tirujñanasambandha his younger contemporary, have both referred to Nataraja as Adavallan. Appar refers to the Nataraja of Chidambaram as *Kuttāḍavallān* and the Nataraja in a number of temples as *Ādavallār*. Sambanda uses the word *Ādavalla aḍigal.* In the Thanjavur temple itself is an inscription which records the setting up of an image of *Āḍavallār*, by Chola Mahadevi, the queen of Raja Raja I. From the description of the image, it is clear that the term *Āḍvallār* refers to Nataraja. Another inscription in the same temple refers to the image of *Āḍavallān* set up by Rajaraja I himself.

As stated earlier, there are two images referred to as *Āḍavallān* and *Āḍavallār* in the Thanjavur temple inscriptions. One was set up by Raja Raja I and the other by his queen Chola Mahadevi. Is the present image tbe one set up by Rajaraja I or his queen ? It would have been difficult to arrive at a conclusion, had it not been for the inscriptions themselves. The measurements given for the image of Adavallan set up by Chola Mahadevi do not tally when compared with the present figure, which is a much larger one. Unfortunately, the detailed description of the Adavallan image set up by Rajaraja I is not available. However, the present image being much larger in size than the one set up by Chola Mahadevi, it would follow that it is the Adavallan image set up by Rajaraja I, to whose reign it can be ascribed also on grounds of style.

At present there are two metal images of Nataraja in the big temple. One is the larger image already identified above as the *Āḍavallān* set up by Rajaraja I, while the other is about 66cm in

height including the pedestal. It is also a beautiful image and has all the characteristics of an early Chola icon. The question may arise as to whether this image is the Adavallar set up by Chola Mahadevi, the queen of Rajaraja I. According to the inscription, the image set up by the queen, should have nine *jaṭas* and seven *pushpamālas*. It should be about 40.6 cm in height. The pedestal should also be proportionately small. But the present figure has thirteen *jaṭas* and eleven *pushpamālas*. Its height is also greater. Hence, the smaller Nataraja image found in the temple is not the one set up by Chola Mahadevi. It is an image probably set up by some-one else, about which we have no records.

Another icon, Dakshinameruvitankar, is also mentioned frequently in the inscriptions at the Thanjavur temple. Unfortunately, as in the case of Adavallan, the detailed description of Dakshinameruvitankar is also not available in the inscriptions. Attempts to identify the main deity of the temple itself as Adavallan and also as Dakshinameruvitankar have been made. But this viewpoint is not correct. It is quite clear that Adavallan is a metal image and refers to Nataraja. The main deity which is the *mulasthana linga* is always referred to in the inscriptions as Rajarajesvaramudaiyar and Rajarajesvarmudaiyar Paramasvami. Hence the term *Āḍavallān* cannot be applied to the main deity. So also the term Dakshinameruviṭankar cannot be applied to the main deity. The inscriptions found in the temple clearly make a distinction between Rajarajesvaramudaiyar and Dakshinameruvitankar. Inscription No. 26 of *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. II speaks of provisions made for both Rajarajesvaramudaiyar and Dakshinamervitankar. Hence Dikshinameruvitankar is a different icon from the main deity. The term *viṭankar* is taken to mean a deity who has not been sculptured but is a *svayambhu* (self-born). By the time of Tirunavukkarasu (A.D. 600) the term has come to be used with reference to *utsavavigrahas* (metal images). Tirvarur has a very famous temple and the main deity is called Vānmikīnatha. The Somaskanda image (the main *utsavavigraha*) of this temple is called Vidhivitankar. There are seven temples in south India where the Somaskanda images (*utsavavigraha*) are

famous by their name *viṭankars*. These places are called *saptavi-tankasthanas* (the seven places of *viṭankas*).

Tirunavukkarasu refers to the processional image of Tiruvarur as Vidhivitankar, Bhavanividhivitankar. It may be mentioned that in all Śaiva temples, the Somaskanda image is the most important and is considered to be the representative of the main deity in metal (*chalabhera*). It receives daily worship with care and is the principal processional deity in all Śaivite shrines. For all festivals, the Soma-skanda image is taken out in procession while others are taken out only on specific occasions. Further, though the Somaskanda group consists of Siva, Uma and Skanda, a separate image of Uma is also set up for this group and is generally known as Bhogaskti Amman. According to an inscription in the Thanjavur temple, a Sakti was set up for Dakshinameruvitankar and this Goddess was taken out in procession separately. Further in all the temples, whether the other forms are available or not, the image of Somakanda with Bhogasakti and the image of Nataraja are invariably noticed. Having regard to the above facts it is quite possible that Dakshinameruvitan-kar was the main Somaskanda image of Rajarajesvara temple. In this connection it may be noted that none of the inscriptions of the temple refers to a Somaskanda image, though almost all other forms of icons are mentioned. Two further facts may be taken into consideration :

(a) Inscription No. 26 refers to provision made for the daily *abhsiheka* of both Rajarajesvaramudaiyar and Dakshina-meruvitankar. It is evident that the reference is the main deity and the principal image of Somaskanda.

(b) The inscriptions of Rajaraja I mention two important weight standards. They are called *Dakshinameruviṭankar* and *Āḍavallān*. From this we may assume that the weights were named after the two principal *utsavavigrahas* of the temple.

18

GOLD IMAGES AND TEMPLE JEWELLERY FROM MADURAI

Images made of gold and exquisite ancient jewellery are priceless possessions of many temples in Tamil Nadu. The famous Minakshi temple at Madurai preserves two images of Goddess Parvati and Lord Sundaresvara made of solid gold. The images, about 45 cm and 35 cm in height, are pieces of classical workmanship. Particularly the figure of Parvati, true to its feminine beauty, is delightfully proportioned and delicately chiselled. The figures assignable to the sixteenth century were probably consecrated by Visvanatha Nayak, the founder of the Madurai Nayak dynasty. He rebuilt the main *vimāna* of Lord Sundareswara and did much to revive the ancient glory of the temple. These golden images are regularly placed in audience in the *ūnjal-maṇḍapa*, on every Friday when special offerings and chanting of sacred hymns are performed.

Similar golden images *svarṇavigrahas* are still under worship in some of the temples of Tamil Nadu. Gold, the most precious metal known to the ancient world, was made use of for making images by emperors and nobles. In the big temple at Thanjavur built by Rajaraja Chola I, about one thousand years ago, gold images were under regular worship. A gold image of Kolkaideva is mentiond in Rajaraja's inscriptions, and is said to have been taken out daily in procession during *Sribali* offerings. The celebrated Chola queen, Sembiyan Mahadevi consecrated a golden image of Chandrasekhara in the temple of Thiruvenkadu in Thanjavur District, in about A.D. 990. References to golden images recorded in inscriptions are numerous. It shows that apart from bronze idols,

idols made of solid gold and silver were consecrated during the centuries and the present images in the Madurai temple are surviving pieces of ancient idols in gold.

The Madurai temple also preserves valuable ancient jewellery the most awe inspirng ones being the crowns, made of gold and set with precious gems, usually called the *navaratna*—the nine gems. Of the two crowns one is a golden turban set with gems and called *ratnachummāḍu*. This is used on one of the festivals when Lord Sundaresvara as a casual labourer is said to have carried earth on his head on behalf of an old lady. The legend, one among the sixty-four sports of the Lord, is enacted annually when this special turban is used to decorate the deity. Along with it are used a basket and a spade, small but very impressive ones, made of solid gold. The other one is a golden crown set with parallel rows of pearls and *rudrāksha* beads interspersed with gems. It is called *Muttu rudrāksha kiriṭa*.

There are many ancient crowns in the collections. Of particular interest are the pearl turban (*muttu talaippākai*) for the Lord, and a pearl crown of the goddess (*Ambal Thirumuḍichchāttu*) made of gold and intricately worked with gems and pearls of impressive size and shape. They are undoubtedly ancient, in all probablity made and gifted by the great Tirumalai Nayaka in the seventeenth century. This ruler was personally interested in the temple, reorganised the festivals, instituted many new ones, besides reforming the temple administration. He is responsible for organising on a very great scale the *Chitrai* festival in the temples of both goddess Meenakshi and Lord Alagar of Alagar Koil. He endowed rich presents, and valuable jewels to adorn his favourite deties, and many of his presents are still in use at Madurai and Alagarkoil.

The gold sceptre, set with gems, still preserved in the Madurai temple received great worship in the time of Tirumalai Nayak. On the eighth day of the *Chitra* festival, the great Nayak, used to receive this sceptre from Goddess Minakshi, carry it to his palace in procession, and place it on the royal throne, offering

special worship. It marked the rule of the Goddess over the kingdom. That this festival contiuned in the regin of Queen Mangammal is portrayed in a mural painting in the same temple. The sceptre used in those royal festivals are still preserved in the temple. Most of the ancient jewellery preserved in this temple, go back to the time of Tirumalai Nayak (17th century).

Almost to the same period are ascribed some of the fabulous jewellery in the Vishnu temple at Alagar koil, the Subrahmanya temple at Tirupparankunram and other temples like Srivilliputtur, Alvartirunagari and Tiruchendur. The sacred temples which were under Tirumalai Nayaka, still preserve some of his pious dedications. The pearl crown called *Muttupakaikoṇḍai*, in use in the Vishnu temple of Alvartirunagari, is a fascinating crown, assignable to the 17th century. It is in the true Mughal tradition indicating cultural contacts. In the Madurai temple itself there are two lovely pearl crowns of considerable antiquity. The crowns, necklaces, pendants, bracelets and bangles and shields called *angis* are the most fascinating pieces of temple jewellery not only for their variety but also for their beauty.

The jeweller's art of the Thanjavur Nayak court can be seen in temples like Mannargudi, Nachchiyarkoil, etc., in Thanjavur district. The jewel-collection of the Srirangam temple is also legendary. Many golden vessels in this collection bear inscriptions recording their dedication by the last of the great Madurai Nayakas, Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha Nayaka and his queens Minakshi, and Krishna amma. A gold palanquin, called *Toḻukku Iniyān*, gifted by that Nayaka in 1735 was repaired by Francis Traverse, the then collector. golden umbrella, vessels, staff, etc., gifted by him and bearing his name are still preserved in the temple. A stone pendant gifted by the Maharatta ruler Sarfoji of Thanjavnr with his name inscribed, is also in Srirangam temple.

A recurring motif among the pendents is the double headed eagle, called Gandaberunda which was the royal crest of the Hoysalas. In the Nayaka court, particularly in the southern region,

this motif became the fashion. Pendants of this shape are found in many temples. A painting of the 17th century in Alagarkoli portrays the pendant adorning Lord Alagar. The Pandya country was famous from the beginning of the Christian era for its pearl and has made profuse of use of pearls in its jewellery.

Though the Nayakas have contributed much to the jeweller's, art, it was in the reign of the Imperial Cholas (10th-13th Century A.D.) that the art of jewel-making was at its zenith. The inscriptions of the Cholas, give an astonishing account of jewels made and gifted to various temples. Rajaraja's inscriptions at Thanjavur give minute description of the shape, size and weight of each jewel besides the number of precious stones and pearls, etc. It is a staggering account of several thousand pearls and precious gems used in jewellery in about A.D. 1000. Virarajendra Chola, in the 11th century A.D. gifted a fine ruby named Trailokyasara to Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram. But nothing of that glorious period has survived. Not a single piece of that age has been identified apart from what is figured in stone sculptures and bronze images. Towards the end of the magnificent rule, a devastating invasion by Malik Kafur removed many of these valuable jewels as booty to Delhi. Tamil Nadu has to recreate itself after this invasion, in this art as in other fields.

Temples in ancient times were aware of the immense value of these jewels and devised suitable safeguards, though loss of temple jewels was not unknown.

An ancient manuscript, *Talapustaka* refers to the method adopted in protecting temple jewels and the joint responsibility fixed on many temple servants. It is stipulated that two responsible officers named *Kaivistari* should receive jewels on festive days and arrange for their return immediately after use to the *Kaiyatchri* (the jewel treasurer). These should be checked and properly sealed by the *Mudradhikari*. Throughout the period, when the jewels were issued and taken out in procession adorning the deity, temple security called *Meykāval* should accompany and keep watch over the jewel. says this ancient manuscript. This manuscript has preserved for us

the day to day administrative history of the Minakshi temple of Madurai, as it existed in the 17th century A.D. in the reign of Tirumalai Nayak, the great benefactor of the temple. This indicates the care and attention paid by the other rulers in preserving temple jewels.

PANAMALAI PAINTINGS

About twenty-seven kilometres from Villupuram is a small hillock called Panamalai. A few metres from it is a boulder and the intervening space is raised as a tank bund. On the hillock is situated the temple of Talagirisvara, the lord of Talagiri, dedicated to Śiva. The term, Talagiri, is the sanskritised form of the Tamil word, Panamalai. Built by the Pallava king Rajasimha, the temple follows the design of the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram, and the Shore Temple of Mamallapuram, which were also built by the same ruler. The Talagirisvara temple is notable for its excellent painting depicting Parvati as Bhavani. The painting of dancing Śiva in a small cell, on the northern side of the main shrine, is almost completely damaged. On the inner face of the back wall, and on the northern wall of this cell, there are paintings in excellent style and colours. But a painting at the back wall has faded, and only the bare outlines are visible. This represents the dance of Śiva in *talasamsphotita* pose, a favourite theme of Rajasimha. This particular mode of dance is profusely carved in the Kailasanatha and Shore Temples. In this representation the right leg is bent and dynamically placed on the ground. The left knee touches the ground, while the foot is bent back. The front right arm is thrown across the body in the *gajahasta* posture and the front left arm is lifted straight up, like a *daṇḍa*, almost parallel to the head and *makuṭa*. The other arms are in various poses, holding fire, *ḍamaru*, *paraśu*, *pāsa*, *śūla*, etc. The right arm across the body is clearly visible and the sole of the left foot is also seen, just below the right arm. Another left arm holds a *paraśu*, which is held upside down. Below it is to be seen a serpent, with

well spread hoods. Unfortunately, the face, legs and arm on the right are irretrievably lost.

Witnessing this divine dance is Bhavani, painted on the left wall of the cell, fortunately well-preserved, though a portion of the waist has been lost. The Devi stands in a delightful *tribhanga* posture like a *kalpalata*, placing her right leg rather steadily on the ground. The left leg is agreeably turned and bent in a charming manner, like a tender sprout branching from the main stalk. The *nilamsuka* or silken garment, is well-treated with floral patterns and covers the legs up to the part just above the ankle. The fastening at the waist is most excellently conceived and treated. The right hand is pleasingly bent and the tender fingers lucidly move towards the chin as if to touch gently the flowing (*alaka*) hair. The left hand moves close to the body in the *lolahasta* posture. A *trisari, muktāhāra* and *ekāvali* adorn the neck. The face is slightly bent towards her Lord and is full of divine charm. The eyes are half closed as if to suggest the feeling of great inward happiness. The well balanced *kīriṭa* on her head resembles the crowns found in Pallava sculptures and as if to suggest her divine nature a *chhatra* (parasol) is depicted over her head, with hanging pendants on its ridges. The unfaltering moving lines drawn by the most skilful artist, the supple treatement of the limbs and the languid eyes, make it one of the finest creations of Indian art. It stands in comparison to the far-famed Avalokitesvara Padmapani painted in Cave I, in Ajanta. The graceful bend of the head, the well-balanced *makuṭa* and the suggestion of divine love are almost identical in both these masterpieces.

This vivid portrayal is drawn skilfully with red ochre. The flesh tint is pleasing and the silken garment a is treated with an agreeable green colour. The influence of the Ajanta tradition can be clearly perceived, but the preparation of the ground and the method of execution show distinct variations. Certainly this speaks of a purely local school.

The outline of the *talasamsphotita* dance of Śiva on the back wall and the painting of Bhavani on the side wall clinch the date of

this painting beyond all reasonable doubt, for Rajasimha was the only monarch to be fond of this theme since he is the builder of this temple, as could be seen from his *birudas* on the basement, the painting must be taken as coeval with the temple, built in *circa* A.D. 700. Further, the representation of the limbs, the fastening, the *bhangas* of the body and the *kirīṭā* are absolutely akin to the Pallava sculptural style. Virtually this becomes one of the finest specimens of early south Indian painting, perhaps precisely dated and so important to the student of Indian art.

20

KHABERIS EMPORION—PORT CITY OF THE CHOLAS

Poompuhar, the celebrated port city of the Cholas, was the leading international port at the beginning of the Christian era. The word *Puhar* in Tamil stands for a place where a river enters the sea. Poompuhar is the place where the River Kaveri joins the sea. This city was known by various names in ancient times like Poompuhar, Kaveripattinam, Kakandi, Sampapati, Cholapattinam, Khaberis Emporium and heaven on earth.

Ancient Tamil works like *Ahananuru*, *Purananuru*, *Pattinappalai*, *Śilappathikaram*, and *Manimekhalai*, and Prakrit works like *Milindapanha*, the Buddhist *Jataka* tales, the *Abhidhammavatara*, the *Buddha Vamsattha katha* and foreign books like the *Geography* of Ptolemy, the *Periplus*, the work of Pliny and ancient inscriptions throw valuable light on the history of this celebrated city. Its ancient name seems to have been Sampapati. *Manimekhalai* says that the Kaveri was brought to the city by a Chola King and the city was renamed Kaveripoompattinam.

The earliest reference to Kaveripattinam is in a Prakrit inscription of the second century B.C., found at Bharhut in northern India. The inscription refers to the gift of a stone slab for an enclosure of a *stūpa* by a Buddhist nun called Some, who hailed from the city of Kakandi. Kakandi, according to *Manimekhalai* was one of the names of Kaveripattinam. It is said that when Prasurama was annihilating the kshatriya race the then Chola king of Kaveripattinam, Kandan, entrusted the care of the city to Kakandan, a son of a *gaṇika*, and retired to forest. Since then the city came to be called Kakandi. The *stūpa* at Bharhut was originally erected by

Aśoka and was enlarged in the time of the Sunga kings in the second century. B.C. That a Buddhist nun from Kaveripattinam, gifted a slab as early as that period, shows that Kaveripattinam was a flourishing city and that it served as an important Buddhist centre. The missionary activities of Aśoka should have left their impact on the city. It continued to be an important Buddhist centre till at least the eighth century A.D.

All the prakrit references to this city come from Buddhist sources. The celebrated book, *Milindapanha* dealing with the questions of Menandar and the answers of Bikku Nagasena, calls this city as Kolapattina, one of the best known ports of the time. The *Milindapanha* is ascribed to the beginning of the Christian era. In a Buddhist *Jataka*, a certain Akitti is said to have lived in a garden near Kaveripattanam.

Puhar was ruled by eminent kings like Toditot Sembiyan, who destroyed a fortress (*Tungeyil*), Muchukunda, Manunithi Chola, Karikala, and Killi Valavan. The celebrated festival to Indra is said to have been instituted during the reign of Toditot Sembiyan. The Chola king Muchukunda is said to have enshrined a *Bhuta* in the market place in honour of the help he had recieved from it during a war with the *Asuras*. Kaveripattinam should have been enlarged during the reign of Karikala.

The lay out of the city, the names of streets, groves and gardens, etc., are given in detail in the *Silappadhikaram*. A perusal of the description convinces the reader that this city was built on a well-laid out plan and that it was a fine example of a planned city as early as 100 B.C. From this it is also learnt town planning was highly developed in the Tamil country even at the beginning of the Christian era.

It is seen from *Pattinappalai, Silappadhikaram* and *Manimekhalai* that the divine architect, Maya, was held in high esteem in the Tamil Nadu. It is likely that the city of Kaveripoompattinam was planned on the lines of the Maya school of town planning and architecture. The city was divided into two main parts, Maruvurpakkam and Pattinappakkam. The intervening space was used as the market

place of the city. The king and his officers, merchants, cultivators and the army lived in Pattinappakkam, while small traders and labourers lived in Maruvurpakkam. On the seashore was located the *cheri* of fishermen and a little away was the settlement of the *Yavanas*. Graneries and storehouses for imported goods were also located in the area.

A graphic description of the life, in Kaveripattinam is given in *Pattinappalai*, while the layout of the city into two Maruvurpakkam and Pattinappakkam, an account of the people who lived in these areas are given in *Silappadikaram*. This is supplemented by *Manimekhalai* and a few early *sangam* works. Foreign notices like *Periplus*, Ptolemy's *Geography*, and Pliny's travels clearly indicate that it was one of the most important international seaports during the beginning of the Christian era. The major part of the sea trade was in the hands of the Cholas at the time and Kaveripattinam was the main port of the Cholas.

A part of this flourishing city seems to have gone under the sea sometime before the time of *Manimekhalai*. However, from the description of the city in the same work it is clear that the sea erosion did not cause much damage and that the city was still flourishing at the time. This is confirmed by the Prakrit texts *Abhidammavatara* and *Buddhavamsatta katha*, written in Kaveripattinam about A.D. 400. The author of the above works, Buddhadatta, was a great grammarian and an accomplished poet. He wrote another Prakrit text called *Vinayavinichchaya*. From the last mentioned work it is learnt that Buddhadatta spent sometime at Bhutamangala in the Chola *rashtra* when Achchuta Vikkanta of the Kalabhrakula was ruling the Chola country (*Achchuta vikkante Kalabhrakulanandane, Mahim samanusasante araddho cha Samapito*). The Kalabrahas seem to have captured the Chola country in the fifth century A.D. and were thrown out in the sixth by the rising powers of the Pallavas in the north and the Pandyas in the south. Achchuta Vikkanta seems to have been a great ruler. He supported Buddhism. From the description of Kaveripattinam given in *Abhidhammavatra* and *Buddhavamsatta katha*, it is learnt that it was still in a flourishing state in

A.D. 400 though trade with Rome has touched a low mark, following the fall of the Roman Empire. In both the works, Buddhadatta gives identical descriptions of Kaveripattinam (*nanāratna Sampunne Vividhapana Sangati Kaveripattana ramme nanāramopasobhite Kelāśikharākara Pasada Paṇimaṇḍite*). Buddhodatta says that Kaveripattinam was inhabited by men and women of noble descent. The city was complete in all aspects and presented a beautiful appearance. There were many bazaars selling various goods. Precious gems of various types were available in plenty. The city was full of lofty and palatial mansions, beautified with entrance towers. There were many groves, pleasing to the eyes. There was the crystal like Kaveri and the cool sea, adding to the beauty of the city. A certain noble, named Kanakadasa, built a beautiful *vihāra* there with enclosures and elegant turrets. Budhadatta states that he wrote the *Abhidammavatara*, and the *Buddhavamsatta katha*, when residing is a cool and pleasant part of the *vihāra* which was very ancient. It is evident that a great Buddha *vihāra* was erected at Kaveripattinam by about A.D. 400. *Manimekhalai* refers to *Indra Vihāram Elu* which is taken to mean seven *vihāras* built by Indra. In this connection it is interesting to mention that there is a school of architecture and sculpture called *Indra matha* prevelant in the Tamil country. It is likely that the *vihāras* at Kaveripattinam were built, according to this school. But *Manimekhalai* refers to the *yavanas*. It is therefore, evident that *Manimekhalai* should be ascribed to a period when Kaveripattinam was still trading with Rome.

Many temples dedicated to Gods like Indra, Surya, Śiva and Vishnu, are said to have existed in the city. A Buddist *vihāra* and a *chaitya* were also located in the area. The *Pattinappalai* refers to people from various countries residing amicably at Puhar. *Manimekhalai* refers to artisans from the Magadha, Avanti and Maratha countries and also Greek sculptors (*Yavana tachchars*) working at Kaveripattinam. But the main life of the city seems to have centered around foreign trade. According to Tamil sources, high-bred horses seemed to have come from the Western world while foodstuffs and other utilitarian objects were imported from Sri Lanka, China

and Malaya. Sandalwood, pepper, precious gems, silk and cotton were exported from this city.

According to the *Periplus*, the Cholas controlled a major part of the seatrade. Three types of ships frequented the port. Country boats sailed along the each coast upto Damilica in the West Coast. The second type seems to be the *Kattamaram* built of logs of wood and called *Sangara.* The third type was the huge ships, called *Colandia*, which sailed to far off countries like Malaya and China.

According to *Manimekhalai*, the city was once submerged under the sea, but from the fact that the same text gives a good description of the city, either, the entire city was submerged and rebuilt after the see had receded or only a part of the city was engulfed. The latter seems more probable. So it must be taken that this important city, like many other ancient ones lost its importance gradually the centuries.

The Pallavas slowly extended their power to the south and Kaveripattinam was included in then territory. The temple of Pallavanisvaram should have been built sometime at the beginning of the sixth Century A.D. by a Pallava monarch whose name is not known. To greater part of the Chola country was annexed be the Pallavas in the reign of Simhavarman, the father of Simhavishnu, and the temple might have come into existence during his period. For at the beginning of the sixth century. Appar and his younger contemporary, Jñanasambandar, temple sang of the Lord of this city. From these hymns it may be gathered that Kaveripattinam did not lose its importance.

In the eighth century, Kaveripattinam continued to be under the Pallavas. In the reign of Rajasimha, the celebrated builder of the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchi, a Buddha *Vihāra* is said to have been erected at Nagapattinam, further south of Kaveripattinam. Rajasimha is said to have ruled extensive territories which included even the Laccadive Islands.

Kaveripattinam, by virtue of its strategic importance, should have played a leading part during this period. A beautiful gilded image of Bodhisattva Maitreya, found at Kaveripattinam, and now preserved in the Madras Museum, must be assigned to this period. In recent excavations at Kaveripattinam, a metal image of the seated Buddha was discovered; this also must be assigned to this period.

From the beginning of this century scholars have been evincing great interest in this ancient port. As early as 1910, the District Collector excavated the city and exposed some wells close to the sea. The Annual Report of the Archaeological Department, Southern Circle, Madras, for the year 1910-11 carries the following report : "A slight excavation conduted last year by the Collector of the District exposed some wells close by the sea. Besides these, when observing this year, a brick well on the sea side was also noticed. The wells existing near the coastline have fiine hard clay surroundings over the burnt earthen walls called *Uraikiṇaru* and also the same arrangement occurs over the brick wells. Probably this arrangement of enclosing mud is to prevent salt water percolating into them. From the presence of this wells, it must be inferred that there should have been habitations adjoining them. There are also mounds, two near the Pallavanisvara temple and two near the Sampapati temple which have been selected for further excavation is possible." This report shows the interest of the people in this ancient city.

Though many private institutions and scholars evinced great interest, much could not be accomplished for want of scientific exations. In 1961, the Archaeological Survey of India excavated the site and continued excavations for three seasons. It has since discontinued them. Even such a small-scale excavation as that carried out has yielded remarkable remains and antiquities. Mangaimadam, Vellaiyan Iruppu, Manigrammam, Pallavanisvaram and Vanagiri have so far been excavated.

Of the structures so far exposed, two deserve special mention. One is a wharf, found at Kilaiyur. Wooden posts have been dis-

covered *in situ*. These were probably used for tying up boats. *Pattinappalai* gives a graphic description of a wharf, where country boats laden with paddy were tied to rows of pegs. It is likely that the wharf now exposed is one such thing of ancient times. Another structure of interest is a part of a Buddha *vihāra*, over 18m long and with square chambers. Unfortunately the entire area could not be exposed since it is covered by an extensive residential portion. Besides the bronze image of seated Buddha, the excavations have yielded remains of an extensive *vihāra*. This *vihāra* is modelled on those in Nagarjunakonda. This suggested connection is strengthened by a *Buddhapāda* carved in limestone, found at Kaveripattinam. Limestone is not locally available in the Tamil country and is clearly from the Andhra region. The carving bears close resemblance to the Nagarjunakonda sculptures. It must, therefore, be assigned to the post-Nagarjunakonda period. If this view is tenable, it is likely that the excavated *vihāra* is the one built by Kanhadasa, where Buddhadatta composed the *Buddhavamsattakatha* and the *Abhidammavatara*.

From *Silappadhikaram* and *Manimekhalai* we learn that Buddhism was flourishing in this city and that there were a Buddha *chaitya* and a *vihāra*. A certain Kanhadasa is said to have built a *vihāra* in this city in about A.D. 400 The *Buddhapāda*, carrying Buddhist symbols like the *Srivatsa*, the *Purṇakalasa*, the *Svastika* etc., were found in the area. A big pillar capital, made of brick and mortar, and some moulded bricks have been unearthed. A remarkable stucco head of a Buddhist deity, also discovered in this area, speaks of the achievements of the stucco artist. Both *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai* pay tribute to stucco artists, who are called *Mannittalar*.

Interesting terracotta figures, glass bangles, precious and semi-precious stones, etc., have been unearthed in this area. Coins of square and circular shapes have also been found. A Roman copper, coin was discovered at Vellaiyan Iruppu. This confirms the literary references to the presence of *Yavanas* in the city. Coins of Rajaraja I were also found during the excavations.

A few remarkable antiquities picked up on the shores of Kaveripattinam are now with the Shanti Sadana Trust of Madras. A fine terracotta figure of mother and child and a terracotta lamp are now in that collection. There are also a number of copper coins there. In one type of coin, a tiger is seen standing with the front paw raised and the tail curved at the back. Over its head is seen the sun motif. The tiger is the emblem of the Cholas and this type is considered to be the one under circulation during the reign of Karikala. The reverse of the coin shows a standing elephant, indicating the conquest of the Kongu country by the Cholas.

21

ANTIQUITY OF MADRAS AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

The history of Madras can be traced back to the Palaeolithic times when Man was roaming about, hunting wild animals for food. A chance find of a Palaeolithic stone implement in Pallavaram, a suburb of Madras, in 1863 by Robert Bruce Foot confirms the presence of Stone Age Man in the region of Madras. The existence of Palaeolithic settlements in Pundi and Vadamadurai, not far from Madras, is attested by large finds of Palaeolithic implements. It is, therefore, evident that several million yars ago man frequented the Madras region for his living.

The subsequent history of Madras begins with the megalithic period, from bout 1000 B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era. Megalithic urn-burials have been found in the Pallavaram area. Recently such urns have also been found on the banks of the river Adayar, almost opposite to the Raj Bhavan, Guindy. Megalithic people who erected stone sepulchral monuments are identified with the Dravidian-speaking folk by many scholars. The megalithic people seem to have practised some form of agriculture and were known for their ability to make fairly polished Black-and-Red earthern ware, of various shapes and sizes, for their day to day use. They were also adept in the use of weapons made of iron. The Madras area was thus active in the Iron Age as well.

The end of this age almost coincides with the celebrated *Sangam* age of the Tamils when this part of the country was ruled by the three crowned kings, Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas. But the region in which the city of Madras is situated was under the control of a line of local chieftains who were called Tondaimans. They are said have

been a branch of the Chola dynasty. The Tondaiman rulers were known as Tirayas and had their capital at Kanchipuram, where the emperor, Aśoka, is said have erected a *Bauddha stūpa.* Among the Tirayars, Tondaiman Ilam Tiryan is praised in literature for his valour. A great irrigation tank dug in the name of a Tiraya is now to be seen in the village, Tenneri (a corruption of the word Tiraiyan-eri, near Chingleput). Madras was under the control of the Tirayas at the beginning of the Christian era.

A reference to a place Mayilarpa in the accounts of the classical geographers of the West, assigned to the first century A.D. is generally taken to be a reference to the modern Maylapore in the heart of the city of Madras. The Tamil country had great commercial contacts with Imperial Rome as attested by the *sangam* works. Roman coins have been picked up from Mambalam and the harbour area in the city shows the place attracted foreign sailors around the beginning of the Christian era.

Mylapore was a centre of Jain religion in the early part of its history. A great Jain scholar, Mylainathar, is said to have hailed from Mylapore. It was also a great centre for Śaiva, Vaishnava and Buddhist followers. Recently two huge statues of Buddha were dug out in Mylapore, attesting to the Buddhist connections with the city. But it is the Hindu faith, that dominates the city of Madras from its beginning to this day.

It would be interesting to mention the location of the celebrated Hindu temples all along the coast, from Mamallapuram in the south to Thiruvorriyur in the north celebrated in the hymns of the Śaiva and Vaishnava saints. At Mamallapuram is a temple dedicated to Vishnu in the reclining posture. Mamallapuram has been a pilgrim centre from early times. One of the earliest Vaishnava saints Budattalwar was bron at Mamallapuram. As one travels towards the city of Madras from Mamallapuram on the coast, a village called Tiruvidanthai may be seen on the road. The impressive temple here is another celebrated Vaishnavaite centre. Thiruvanmiyur is a Śaivaite centre with temple dedicated to Śiva, sung of by the *Nayanmars* in the seventh

and eighth centuries A.D. Mylapore in the heart of Madras was both a Śaiva and Vaishnava centre. Here a temple dedicated to Siva as Kapalisvara has been held in veneration from early times. One of the Śaiva saints named Vayilar was born here. It was here that the Śaiva saint, Tirujñana Sambandar, miraculously brought back to life a dead girl Pumpavai. This is celebrated in religious literature and a festival is conducted annually in its honour. Tiruvallikeni, where the famous temple dedicated to Vishnu as Parthasarathy stands was in ancient times a suburb of Malypore and naturally a number of Vaishnava families were living in Mylapore in early times. Peyalwar one of the three early Alvars, assigned to the sixth century A.D. was born in Mylapore. Further north, the temple of Tiruvorriyur was a Śaiva centre. All these temples, at Mamallapuram, Tiruvidantai, Tiruvanmiyur, Mylapore and Tiruvorriyur were in a flourishing condition even as early as the sixth century A.D.

From the middle of the sixth century Madras was under the sway of the celebrated Pallavas of Kanchi. Mahendravarman, an outstaning ruler, poet and artist, who ruled at the beginning of the seventh century A.D., excavated a cave-temple on the hill in Pallavaram, near Madras airport. The name itself, a corrupt form of the word Pallavapuram shows its royal connection.

In the middle of the seventh century Mamallapuram was established as a royal port. It was renamed Mamallapuram after Narasimhavarman I who sent a naval expedition to Sri Lanka to help his friend, Manavarma, gain the throne. It the beginning of the eighth century another great Pallava, Rajasimha, erected the charming structural temple on the shore at Mamallapuram. He was a great lover of art and variety and assumed titles like *Kalāsamudra*—Ocean of arts. He was responsible for excavating all the cave temples, monoliths, bas-relief, sculptures and other world famous pieces of art now found in Mamallapuram and its neighbourhood. Besides the temple of Vishnu as Ranganatha, a cave excavated to the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu also became a great centre. Tirumangai alvar who visited Mamallapuram not long after these creations, has sung the praise of Vishnu as Varaha. This temple, now known as

Adivaraha cave, received benefiactions at the hands of subsequent rulers. Inscriptions of the 16th century A.D. show that this temple was in continuous worship, celebrating festivals on a grand scale. The Adivaraha temple and also the Jalasayana temple, now in the middle of Mamallapuram, are living institutions even today, attracting thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the contury.

The Vishnu temple at Tiruvidantai that was in existence from the sixth century A.D. was renovated subsequently and the present structure is a middle 10th century Chola one. It carries a large number of inscriptions giving details about land gifts for worship.

The Tiruvanmiyur temple was rebuilt in Cholas times. Three inscriptions are now found on the walls of the Amman shrine. The present Śiva sanctum to seems too have been built in recent times. There are some excellent sculptures of the Chola period in the niches of the new structure. A fine 16th century basement of an entrance tower was in extistence in front of this temple. Unfortunately this was dismantled to be replaced by a cement structure.

Not far way from Tiruvanmiyur is a little village called Velachery, on the outskirts of Guindy. It was an ancient settlement with a number of temples dedicated to Śiva, Vishnu, the Saptamatas and other deities. The village seems to have come into existence in about the eight century A.D. and bears a number of Chola inscriptions of the 10th century A.D. The Śiva temple is a Chola structure still carrying sculptures on its walls. More than one Vishnu temple seems to have been in existence in this village. Huge images of Vishnu with his consorts both in standing and seated forms are still seen indicating that it was a Vaishnava settlement. Even now Yadavas, who are great devotees of Vishnu live in large numbers in this village.

The Kapalisvarar temple at Mylapore is said to have been originally located on the seacoast. The exact location is a matter of speculation and controversy. A few inscribed stones referring to the temple of Kapalisvara and Poombavai a devotee of Śiva, were found lying burried in the premises of the Bishop at San Thome. It is thought that the original siva temple was located somewhere near

this site. The present structure of Kapalisvara seems to be a 17th century building which later on underwent additions. The present entrace tower to the Kapali temple was built in 1906 as an attractive structure. It is recorded in history that the Hindu temples at Mylapore were destroyed by the Portugese in the 17th century when the ruling Vijayanagara Emperor had to invade San Thome and Goa simultaneously, to protect the interest of the Hindu faith. It is possible that the original Kapali temple was destroyed during this troublesome period by the Portugese.

The Parthasarathi temple at Tiruvallikeni has received attention from the time of Pallavas; the earliest inscriptions in the city of Madras dating back to A.D 800 is found in this temple. The record refers to certain gifts made to the temple of Vishnu by a noble, in the reign of the Pallava ruler Dantivarman. The inscription is found on a loose slab. Probably the original structure was altered during the renovations of the later periods. The present structure, however, was erected in A.D. 1564 in the time of Vijayanagara ruler Sadasiva. The inscription records that a certain Narasingadasa installed the images of Narasimha, Mahalakshmi, Bhudevi, Varahanarayana and Sehsa. The images of Krishna, Rukmani, Balarama, Manmatha, Aniruddha and Satyaki now found inside the sanctum was also installed by him. A bronze image of the goddess Vedavalli was also made and gifted by him. The temples, the *maṇḍapas* and the enclosures and jewellery were gifted by this Narasingadasa.

It must be said that the annual festivals conducted both at the Kapalisvarar temple and also at the Parthasarathi temple are the most celebrated festivals in the city of Madras attracting lakhs of devotees. Particular mention must be made of the festival of sixty-three Śaiva saints celebrated annually in the month of April the Kapalisvarar temple.

The Śiva temple at Tiruvorriyur has not only received the pious adorations of the Śaiva saints but also the great rulers of the country who have personally visited the temple on many occasions and endowed lands fot its up keep and celebration. There are fine sculptures of the Pallava period now in the premises of Tiruvorriyur

temple. However, it is the main structure built of stone which is of historic interest. It was built under orders of the great Chola emperor Rajendra I in the beginning of 11th century A.D. Ravi alias Vira Chola Maha Taksha was the name of the architect who constructed the temple of granite, recorded in inscriptions. Inscriptions of Pallavas, Cholas and later dynasities like Pandyas and Vijayanagara rulers are found on slabs and walls of the temples. There was a separate pavilion in the temple for the exposition of grammar and the Śaiva philosophy, particularly of the Somasiddhanta school. Other interesting factors about this temple are the visit of the Chola rulers like Rajadhiraja II, who witnessed a dance performed by a dancing girl on the occasion of a special festival shows the importance of the place as centre of fine arts.

The development of the city of Madras on medern lines belongs to recent history.

22

A PALLAVA GRANTHA INSCRIPTION IN SIAM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

An inscription in Pallava grantha characters of the sixth century A.D. is of great interest to students of Tamil history. The inscription is found on a granite slab and is now preserved in the Museum of Vat Mahatat, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, a town in Thailand.

According to local sources the inscribed slab came from one of the brick Śiva shrines in the town which contains a *linga*. Dr de Casparis, who examined this inscription ascribed it to the sixth century A.D. and has stated that it refers to Śiva. A complete reading of the inscription has not so far been published.

A part of the inscription at the beginning seems to have been lost. The first letter reads *ta* followed by a full stop, indicated by two vertical lines. The rest of the inscription reads *Tamrayāralakēśvara* and is also followed by a full stop. It is clear that the inscription is in Pallava grantha characters of the Tamil country assignable to the sixth century A.D.

The word *Tamrayār alakēsvara*, is a label referring to the temple. The word, *Tamrayar*, seems to be the ancient name of the place; the present name being Tammarat. Evidently the inscription stands for Lord Alakēsvara of (the town of) Tamrayar. The name Alakēsvara may either refer to Kubēra, the Lord of Alaka, or Lord Śiva named Alakēswara. The latter meaning seems to be more acceptable since the inscription is said to come from a Śiva temple.

The name Tamrayar is interesting. We have mentioned that the inscription is in Pallava grantha characters of the Tamil country,

pointing to close contacts between this part of the world and Tamil Nadu. So it is possible that the word Tamrayar is a corrupt form of Tamil arayar.

The word *Arayar*, though literally it stands for a king and is an honorific term conferred by a monarch on persons of distinction. The name Tamilarayar occurs in many inscriptions of the Tamil country standing for chieftains. A certain Tamilarayan is mentioned in a inscription of the ninth century A.D. at Narttāmalai, near Pudukkottai. It is, therefore, possible that the place, Tamrayar, was named after a distinguished noble from the Tamil country, who might have gone to the place on a trade mission.

The full name of the present town is Nakorn Sri Tammarat. Evidently Nakorn stands for Nakaram. A Commercial town or also a mercantile corporation is always referred to as *Nakaram* in all the inscriptions of the Tamil Nadu. It is possible that a mercantile guild from the Tamil country headed by a certain Tamilarayan established itself in this place long before the sixth century A.D.

It is necessary to note the importance of this town as a place of commercial contact. It is connected by land to Takua Pa, the famous port on the west coast, which was an entrepot for Tamil merchants from very early times. On the eastern side Champa and Sumatra could be easily reached from Tammarat, so much so this place and Takua Pa are considered to form an axis for commercial and cultural contacts across the peninsula.

The existence of such mercantile guilds from the Tamil country is further supported by the find of a Tamil inscription of the ninth century A.D., in Takua Pa. The ancient name of Takua Pa is Takkolam, referred to as such by Ptolemy in his *Geography*. A Chinese work of the third century A.D. mentions this port as Thaku-li-o from where Su-Wu, an ambassador of the king of Fu-nan, is said to have left for India. The place is also mentioned in Rajendra's conquests as Talai Takkolam.

But the most important find is the Tamil inscription which refers to *Manigrāmam* a mercantile guild and mentions a Vishnu temple and a tank called Avani Nāraṇam, which were placed under the protection of a *Sēnamukha*, army.

Prof K.A.N. Sastri, who has edited this inscription, has rightly assigned it to the reign of Nandivarman III, the victor of Tellāru. Nandi bore the significant title, Avaninārananan and is said to have maintained a powerful fleet. The inscription was not found in Takua Pa port proper, but in a place about 16 km inland on the northern bank of the Takua Pa river.

Besides this inscription a group of stone sculptures bearing Pallava features was found in the same area. They are referred to by the local people as Pra Narai. The group consists of three sculptures, a standing four-armed male deity, a female deity and a bust of a male figure all of which are embedded in the trunk of a large tree. Nearby are fragments of sculptures, some relating to these three figures, an uncompleted sculpture of a seated figure and other fragments.

On the south bank of the Takua Pa river, opposite these sculptures are to be seen the remains of an ancient structure, and according to the local people the Pra Narai group of sculptures came from this ancient structure. We have seen that the inscription refers to a temple tank called Avanināranam.

The present name, Pra Narai, given to the group by local tradition, seems to be the shortened form of Prithvi Nāranam, a Sanskrit equivalent of the word Avaniāranam, recorded in the inscription.

The four-armed standing figure can be identified as an image of Vishnu, as traces of a *Srivatsa* symbol are clearly visible on the right chest. The portrayal of the arms and the garments resembles features of Vishnu sculptures of the Pallava period in the Tamil

country. The sculpture of the goddess found along with this is evidently Bhudēvi.

It is interesting to note that the Tamil inscription found here also refers to Nāngur. Nāngur in the Chola country is situated very near Kaveripattinam and was an important centre from very early times.

The Chola emperor, Karikala took to wife, a Vēlir princess of Nāngur. Tirumangai Alvār who lived in the eight cantury A.D. has praised the heroism of the warriors of Nāngur in his poems. The Takua Pa inscription mentioning Nāngur is dated not long after Thirumangai Mannan.

This brings us to another interesting field of enquiry in the history of the Tamil country. At Kaveripattinam, the ancient port of the Tamil country, there is a suburb even now called Manigramam, on the southern bank of the river. We have seen that the inscription at Takua Pa, besides mentioning Nāngur mentions Manigramam.

The references to Nāngur and Manigrāmam unmistakably suggest that a mercantile guild from Kaveripattinam left on its eastern voyage from Puhār with a strong contingent of warriors from Nāngur who were known for their valour and Kaveripattinam was still a flourishing place in the reign of Rājasimha Pallava in the eight century A.D., as reported by the find of a gilded Bhodisattva Maitreya.

The Takua Pa inscription must be dated within 100 years of this period. Kaveripattinam continued to flourish in the reign of Nandi, the victor of Tellāru. As mentioned earlier, Nandi maintained a powerful fleet and what is more the *Nandikalambakam*, a contemporary work on Nandivarman, refers to him as the ruler of Puhār.

It is well-known that the major part of the trade with the Middle East and the Far East was in the hands of the Cholas from about the third century B.C. and that the main port of the Cholas

was Kaveripattinam. So far as the Tamil country was concerned, Kaveripattinam continued to be a port of importance till at least the ninth century A.D., while Takua Pa in Thailand played an important role as a connecting link between the Tamil country and the Far East.

THE DATE OF DIVYASURICHARITAM—A HISTORICAL WORK ON VAISHNAVA SAINTS

Sankara and Ramanuja are the two great revolutionaries of south India; by revolution we mean not necessarily violent, overthrow of the existing systems, but imperceptibly and suitably ushering in new thoughts in social and religious concepts which, judging from the results, have influenced the life of the people for well over thousand years. While Sankara symbolises intellectual supremacy, Ramanuja stands out as the embodiment of love and compassion. A discerning researcher of Ramanuja movement would be struck by the catholicity of outlook and the genuine love of the followers towards the religious uplift of all sections of the society, particularly the down trodden. It mattered little whether one was a born vaishnava or a follower of other religion, but conscious efforts were made to bring people of all castes into the fold of this religion of abundant love and devotion. It is a surprise to historians that such a great movement got split up on petty matters, lost track of its main path and drifted into a narrow sectarian path isolating themselves from the rest of the people and often exhibiting animosities among themselves. How a true follower of Ramanuja can entertain hatred in his mind is beyond comprehension. If any proof is required to know the history of the great movement initiated by Ramanjua, the vaishnavites have themselves left abundant histrorical in material their literature.

They have carefully preserved both in writing and tradition the historic personages and the events through the centuries, that contributed to the prevelant state of vaishnavism. The *Divyasuricharita* and *Guruparampara prabhava*, exemplify their anxiety to leave as far as

possible an authentic history of their religious movement. In fact the historical material left by the vaishna vites are unparallelled and there is an urgent need to evaluate these works in the light of recent advancements in epigraphical and archaeological studies. There are many minor persons about whom we know nothing, except from *Guruparampara*. They are found mentioned in epigraphical records of the temple and I am convinced that there is much more history in these writings than we have hitherto understood.

But at the sametime it must be understood that certain amount of myths and legends are interwoven in these works, either to infuse sanctity or owing to the beliefs in miracles which the historian will be within his bounds to reject as unhistoric. For example a story is told about how Ramanuja took over the administration of Srirangam temple, which is patently repugnant to modern taste and one cannot believe that the great saint who had nothing but love to give could act as told in the story. Similarly a story is told of a Chola contemporary of Ramanuja and his persecution. It has been shown that Srirangam received the maximum royal patronage under this Chola ruler.

The earliest historical work of some authority, seems to be the *Divyasuricharita* by one Garudavahana Pandita. From the colophon of the *Divyasuricharita* it is learnt, that he belonged to Kasyapagotra and was the chief of Sriranga *aroghyasala* at Srirangam. He was also called a Kavi and Vaidya Purandara. His teacher was one Varada of *Vatulagotra*. His father is mentioned as Kshemesa Lakshmi Sakha and mother Lokesa.

The *arogyasala* mentioned was a hospital curing the illness of the devotees following the traditional Dhanvantri medical texts. Such hospitals existed in all the major temples which is befitting their philosophy of love. But in modern times, while there are persons to spend several lakhs to erect useless new structures, none considers its terms of establishing an up-to-date hospital as an adjunct to the temple.

A slab set up in the temple of Dhanvantri shrine in the fourth *prākāra* is a record of the Hoysala ruler Vira Ramanatha in the year A.D. 1257. Singanna Dandanayaka, a commander of Vira Ramanatha, constructed an *arogyasala* on the west side of the *gopura*, enshrined the image of Dhanvantri, called Eduttakai Alagiya Nayanar and endowed lands for its upkeep. The *Śalai* was entrusted to the care of one Garudavahana Pandita who was a *rakshaka* of the donor. Obviously the Garudavahana Pandita, should have cured the commander of some illness. So it is evident that the temple of Dhanvantri and the *Śala* came into existence for the first time in A.D. 1257.

About 250 years later in 1493, the *arogyasala* was destroyed in fire. A certain Srinivasa also known as Sriranga Garudavahana Bhatta son of Alagiyamanavala Mangaladiraya, rebuilt the *arogyasalai*, reconsecrated the deity Dhanvantri *emperuman* and made provision for medicinal decoction to be offered daily to the God.

According to *Koiloḻugu*, Lord Ranganatha was afflicited with indigestion which Ramanjua cured with a medicinal decoction and ever since entrusted the offering of decoction to one Garudavahana Pandita and it is this Garudavahana Pandita who is credited with the authorship of *Divyasuricharitam*. So it is held the *Divyasuricharitam* was written in the time of Ramanuja. It is likely that the *Koiloḻugu* makes up the story with a view to give a sanctity by ascribing it to Ramanuja. The *arogyasala* itself came into existence only in 1257, 125 years later than Ramanuja. The author of the *Divyasuricharita*, specifically says that he was the chief of the *Arogysala* Sri Rangadhipa Arogyasala Vallabha. It is, therefore, unlikely that *Divyasuricharita* was written in the time of Ramanuja. We have seen that the *Śala* was burnt down by fire in 1493, rebuilt and reconsecrated by Srinivasa alias Garudavahana. It is he who also instituted the offering of medicinal decoction. The editor of *Divyasuricharita* rightly points out that the author of the *Divsasuricarita* was one Srinivasa alias Garudavahana Pandita. In the epigraph of A.D. 1493 the Garudavahana was also called Srinivasa. It is in all probability this Srinivasa alias Garudavahana was the author of

Divyasuricharita, the earliest authentic account on the life of Vaishnava *Acharyas.*

It brings up to another important point of historical enquiry. The most authentic and exhaustive Tamil work on the history of Vaishnava *Acharyas* is *Guruparamparaprabhava* by Pinbalagiya Perumal Jiyar. After giving a summary of the history of *Alvars* this author deals exhaustively with the life of Ramanjua. This author is assigned to 13th century by scholars. But he quotes extensively from *Divyasuricharita,* and is defenitely later than that work. Secondly it has been shown by M. Arunachalam that many of the dates given in this work are historically untrustworthy. The discrepancies should have arisen due to the fact that the text was written after a long time gap which tried to make the best of what was available. It is not without justice that S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, the editor of *Guruparamapara* suggests that this work should have been written by one of the disciples of the *Jiyar.*

In a recent publication of *Divyasuricharita* Dr K.K.A. Venkatachari, the editor, has the following remarks to make, "The date of *Divyasuricharita* is not certainly fixed. Traditionally it has been thought that the author was a contemporary of Ramanuja because the work contains a reference to Ramanuja which suggests he is still alive. Prof. B.V. Ramanujam, however, dates the work in the late 15th or early 16th Century. He bases this date on the 19th *Sarga* which he considers original contrary to the traditional view."

24

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY—AN APPRECIATION AND TRIBUTE

If Indian art has taken its rightful place in the history of World art, if the World, particularly the West, recognises the subtle and at the sametime delicate hands of ancient Indian artists, it is undoubtedly due to the pioneering work of Ananda Coomaraswamy. Not that there was no writer before him on Indian Art. Many of his ideas were in the air, but so rapid and perfect was his assimilation of them, so vigorous and minutely penetrative was the quality of his understanding, so firm and independent his intiative, that even these were instantly stamped with the express image of his personality. Ananda Coomaraswamy had an extraordinary background of Indian literature, philosophy, history and art and could cite with equal felicity from Pali, Tamil, Sanskrit or other Indian literature, to bring out the spirit which went into the making of these exquisite pieces of art and that was the inner secret of his success. He personally visited, often on several occasions most of the ancient and historical sites and museums. It was this intellectual curiosity that opened to him the immense realm of knowledge which he later recreated by his magnificent literature on Indian art.

This tribute is mainly concerned with his original and fascinating contributions to the study of Indian art rather than his life; for it is well-known, that Ananda Coomaraswamy was the son of Sri Muthu Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka to an English mother Lady Elizabeth Clay of Kent and that he was in his earliest days an outstanding scientist, serving as the Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Sri Lanka and that he even discovered a new mineral

thorianite. But soon his innate love for the aesthatic values of life and his abiding interest in the creative genuis of the artists of the bygone ages brought him to the realm of art history in which he discovered his fullness. He was not only able to delve deep into the ecstasies of these art forms, but also communicate to others the same joy through his illuminating and lucid writings.

Coomaraswamy was a prolific writer, and is credited with several volumes on Indian and Sinhalese art and over 500 research articles. His work *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, is a classic, a fascinating cultural study, often spoken of as the most significant contribution to universal understanding of Greater Indian Art. In this monumental work, he outlines the architecture, sculpture, painting, textiles, metal works and other crafts of India and Far East, which makes it an indispensible work for any interested in the proper understanding of the subject. His work on *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* published in 1913 in Edinburgh was also published in French in 1923. His catalogues of the Indian collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, carry valuable data and are illustrative of his systematic work. Two volumes on Indian drawings were published in London in 1910-12. He has also written on Indian craftsman, some ancient elements in Indian decorative art, Bronzes from Ceylon, Rajput painting, the frescoes of Elura, etc. His work *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, published in 1908 is still an authoritative work on the subject.

A study of his work on Indian art, beginning with the Indo-Sumerian, dismisses the narrowness of time and space and make us feel that we are the children of a common heritage, and we speak the same language only in different dialects. 'It may be remarked' says Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'that the further we go back in history, the nearer we come to a common cultural type, the further we advance the greater the differentiation.'

Regarding the Dravidian elements in Indian art, Ananda Coomaraswamy considers the cults of the phallus and of Mother Goddess, *Yakshas* and other native spirits porbably springing from Dravidi-

ans which played a major role in the development of image worship, that is of *Puja* as distinct from *Yagña*.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's view point on the beginnings of Hindu and Buddhist theistic art is worth recalling. "There is evidence in the early Vedic texts, revealing connection of the elemental deities with certain animals by which they might be represented in the ritual. The horse was associated with Agni and Surya, the bull with Rudra and Indra; the animal *avatars* of Prajapati was later appropriated by Vishnu. The wheel which later on becomes the mark of Cakravarti, the discus of Vishnu and the Buddhist wheel of law originally represented Sun."

It was the firm conviction of Ananda Coomaraswamy that temples and images should have existed before 2nd Century B.C. and perhaps even earlier.

When some scholars, considered the Gupta age as a period of Brahmanical revival, when Hindu temples and images began to appear, Ananda Coomaraswamy stoutly refuted the suggestion and said that there is no evidence of any preceeding lack of continuity in the development of Brahmanical culture. Certainly there had never existed a Buddhist India, that was not as much and at the sametime, and in the same area, a Hindu India. In any case an age of hightened aesthetic consciousness of final redactions of epics and *Puranas* and of codifications and systematisation in the arts, must have been preceded by centuries not of inactivity but of intense and creative activity. The Gupta period is one culmination of florescence rather than of renaissance.

The Grerco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra, according to Ananda Coomaraswamy may be described from one point of view as representing an eastward extension of Hellenistic civilization mixed with Iranian elements, from another a westward extension of Indian culture in Western garb.

The origin of the Buddha image—the representation of the *Tatagata* in human form, in sculptural representation, was a subject

of absorbing interest. Many conflicting views were propounded. Made by the craftsman Gogga under orders of king, Meruvarman in 8th Century A.D. the images represent Lakshnadevi (Mahishasura-mardini), Sakti devi, Ganesa and Nandi with inscriptions on the pedestal.

The sectarian classification of temple styles adopted by Fergusson does not appeal to Ananda Coomaraswamy. He says just as in the case of sculpture there are no Buddhist, Jaina, and Brahminical buildings in the Indian styles of the period. Nor can a clear distinction of Vishnu and Śiva temples made in the *Manasara* be recognised in medieval practise. The Indian temple is one but there are provincial variations existing side by side with the secular variation in pure style. In respect of these the only adequate classification is geographical.

Comparing the Rajaput painting with the Great school of Mughal painting, Ananda Coomaraswamy says Mughal painting is academic, objective, dramatic and eclactic. Rajput painting is essentially an aristocratic folk-art, appealing to all classes alike, static statue, lyrical and inconceivable apart from the life it reflects. Quoting the works of Jehangir's own words, Coomarawamy says, Mughal painting after Akbar is almost devoid of any poetical background. Rajput painting on the other hand illustrates every phase of medieval Hindi literature and its themes cannot be understood without a thorough knowledge of Indian epics, the Krishna *lila* literature, music and erotics.

Ananda Coomaraswamy has also noticed the continuing tradition of the ancient architecture in south India. Regarding cultural migration, particularly of craftsman to the Far East, Ananda Coomarawamy has this to say, 'The importation of craftsman and labourers including quarrymen who have their own methods of obtaining the large stone beams required is of interest. In my view, it is far from unlikely, that some or the whole of the work may have been done by workmen of Indian birth under the guidance of *Silpins* using Indian *Silpa Sastra.* Such workmen have moved from

India to Ceylon in large numbers at various periods, the *Mahavamsa* mentioned carftsmen and a thousand families of the 18 guilds sent by a Pandya king from Madura, to Ceylon in the time of Vijaya."

The Indian element in the art of the Far East is nevertheless a considerable one; for here there was not merely the acceptance an iconography and of formula but the assimilation of a mode of thought so that we have to take into account effects of both of outer form of Indian art and of an emotional working of Indian thought.

Ananda Coomaraswamy in the earlier art of Cambodia, Champa, and Java, holds that really the art and culture of the Deccan that is traceble rather than those of southern India. Though this view needs revision, it cannot be doubted that before the time of the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Kalingas, the Andhras of Orissa and Venginad laid the foundations of Indian or Indianised states beyond the moving seas.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was conscious and aware of the originality and vigours of the national schools of the Far East and in fact considered it an injustice to apply the name of Indian colonial to the several national school after the end of 8th century.

In architecture, sculpture, and in the drama, and minor arts each country developed its own formula, freely modifying, adding to or rejecting older Indian forms.

It is in the interpretation of the theme of the cosmic dancer, the dance of Śiva, that Ananda Coomaraswamy rose to the highest pinnacle of art appreciation. He united inseperably with that supreme thought, which is echoed in brilliant work the *Dance of Śiva*. In this writing Coomaraswamy is supremely native to the theme and at the sametime one of the greatest art connoisseurs of the world besides being one of the greatest devotees of that cosmic dancer. Like the Chola monarchs he was a bee delighting ever in the nectar of the lotus feet of Nataraja. According to him the Nataraja is one of the greatest creations of Indian art, a perfect visual image of *becoming*, adequate complement and contrast to the Buddha type of *Pure* being. The movement of the dancing figure is so admirably

balanced while it fills all space, it seems nevertheless to be at rest, realising the simultaneity of the *Pancha Krityas*, which the symbolism specially designates". Summing up his appreciation of Siva-Nataraja, Commaraswamy says, 'It may not be out of place to call attention to the grandeur of this conception itself as a synthesis of science, religion and art. How amazing the range of thought and sympathy of those *rishi* artists who conceived such a type as this, affording an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature, not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, nor acceptable to the thinkers of one century only, but universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the *Bhakta*, and the artist of all ages and all countries." This is sublime poetry. Ananda Coomaraswamy is undoubtedly a great *Maharishi* of our age, who reinterpretted for us the arts and thoughts of the *Rishis* of yore.

25

ASTRONOMY AS AN AID TO HISTORY

It is over 125 years ago that a dedicated band of Western scholars like Wilson, Max Muller, Winternitz and Fleet, made a monumental study of ancient Indian literature and culture. Any discerning scholar would be struck by their critical acumen, and their thirst for the proper understanding the real import and possible data of the compositions.

F.E. Pargiter wrote his thought provoking work, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* in 1922, a very valuable contribution, though it is not absolutely free from prejudices. In epigraphy, Fleet, Kielhorn, Hultzsch and other eminent scholars tried to give a factual framework to Indian history.

One of the most outstanding scholars to concentrate on astronomy as aid to history and epigraphy was L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai, whose *Indian Ephemeris*, is a work of dedication; indispensable aid for historians and epigraphists of India. Swamikkannu Pillai deserves the greatest praise for his boldness of conception and originality of approach to make Indian astronomy the most acceptable scientific aid to reconstruct Indian chronology. He was at the sametime conscious of its short comings and put forward his conclusions with abundant caution. He worked out all possible solutions for each problem before suggesting any date and his work is undoubtedly a model of scientific enquiry.

In recent years, a lively dialogue is being witnessed on the authenticity of the two great epics, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābharata*, and their dates as computed from the astronomical data furnished by the *epics* themselves. Eminent scholars like H.D. Shankalia and

Prof D.C. Sircar have raised certain doubts about the historicity of some of the dates furnished by the epics.

The claim that the Indus script has been deciphered adds new dimensions to the study of our antiquity. The Finnish, Russian and Iravatham Mahadevan's analysis of the script suggests, judging from the grouping of the signs and the possible structure of the language, that the language of the Indus script is Dravidian. The computer analysis seems to rule out the possibility of the language being Indo-Aryan. The Finnish and Russian scholars consider that the religion of the Indus people has an astral basis, which should be taken into account in discussing Indian astronomy.

The question now arises whether there is any basis for a re-consideration of the dates already suggested by scholars. I think that a few points taken for granted are modified by recent discoveries and need re-examination. The following may be cited as an example :

L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai holds that week days were not known in the Tamil country before the eight century A.D. The Vunna Guravaypalem copper plate grant of Paremesvaravarman I (A.D. 689) refers to *Aditya dina* (Sunday) *trayodasi*, *Sukla paksha* in the month of *Paushya* (*Tai*). This dated epigraph shows that week days were definitely known in south India earlier to *8th century A.D.*

The need to re-examine the dates on the basis of astronomical data in ancient literature is thus quite obvious but this re-examination could also benefit by recent scientific aids like electronic computors.

But on the other hand it would be interesting to know the concept of ancient astronomy as found in : (a) the earliest body of Indian literature, the Vedas (the *epics* and *Purānas* being decidedly later); (b) the earliest body of Tamil literature; and (c) the earliest inscriptions of the country that could be read.

Firstly to consider the vedic evidence. The concept of 360 days in a year, twelve month cycle and the thirteenth intercalary month, lunar and solar year are known to the *Rig Veda*. "He,

who, accepting the rites dedicated to him, knows the twelve months and their productions and that which is supplimentarily engendered.''

Wilson notes : *Veda ya upajāyate* who—knows what is *upa* additionally or subordinately produced. The expression is obscure but in connection with the preceding *Veda Māso dvādasa* who—knows the twelve months—we cannot doubt the correctness of the scholiast's conclusion that the thirteenth, the supplimentary or intercalary month of the Hindu luni-solar month, is alluded to, "that the thirteenth or additional month which is produced of itself in connection with the year, *yas trayodasi dhika māsā upajāyate Samvatsara Samipe Swayam evodpadyate.* The passage is important as indicatory of the concurrent use of the lunar and solar year at this period and the method of adjusting one to the other".

Wilson also holds that "the Sabeism of the Hindus, if it may be so termed, differs entirely from that of the Chaldeans in omitting the worship of the planets. The constellations are never named as objects of venerations or worship".

With Vedic sacrifices assuming great proportions in the time of the *Yajur Veda*, the science of astronomy also advanced as the sacrifices were intimately associated with the various cycles of the year. The *Yajur Veda* refers to the twelve months, 24 half-months (*Chaturvimsati Ardhamāssa*), the 27 *nakshatras*, the bright and dark fortnights (*paksha*), the new moon (*amavāsi*), the full moon (*Pūrnimāsi*), the 6 seasons, etc. The full moon-days of the months of *Palguni* and *Chitra* are also explicitely mentioned (*Phalguni Pūrnamāse dīksheran*; *Chitrā Purnamāse dīksheran*, etc.). The equinoxes also are mentioned. These ideas are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* as well. A point of interest is that, except the sun, the moon and Rahu, the other planets were unknown to the Vedic seers. planetary astronomy based on the positions of the various *grahas*, which play an important role in the epic and puranic period, seems to be a later development.

In early Tamil literature, one verse is of historic interest as it refers to almost all the planets by name, their respective positions

at the time of a lunar eclipse which occured just before dawn. It is the eleventh verse, in the *Paripādal* group referring to the floods in the river Vaigai at Madurai. Basing his calculations on the commentary of the ancient commentator, Parimelagar, Swamikkannu Pillai calculated the date of occurrence of the eclipse. According to the verse, the lunar eclipse took place just before dawn when all the planets were in their respective houses and *agni* was at its height. Swamikkannu Pillai gave to possible dates, A.D. 17, and A.D. 634 and said that the latter was the more probable. Recently this date is being re-examined.

In the *Puranānūru* collections there are many references to astronomical details; one of them is of great interest. *Puram* 229, sung by Kūdalūr Kilār on the death of the Chera ruler Yānaikat Chēy Māntaran Ceral Irumporai, refers to a meteor which fell in the dead of night of a *Panguni Uttiram* day, when *Kriṭṭikā* was in *Mesha rāsi*. It also gives the eighth *nakshatra* before *Uttara*, and the eighth *nakshatra* after *Uttara*. The verse also refers to the form of *Anusha*, which resembled a *muḍappanai* (palm tree) and that of *Punarpusa nakshatra* resembled a tank. On seeing this meteor, it was predecited that a great calamity would fall on the ruler. On the seventh day of the occurrence, the royal elephant fell dead; the royal drum was torn to pieces; the King's parasol fell from it's stand; the horses remained motionless and the great ruler attained his heavenly abode as predicted. It is quite clear from the above verse that by the time of *Puranānūru* the zodiac, the months, the *nakshatras*, their forms and calculating the eighth star, before and after the one at height, were all known to Tamil poets.

The art of predictions based on astronomy was well-known. Two other verses of *Puranānuru* (117 and 388) refer to the planet Venus. There was a belief that if Venus appeared in the southern horizon, the country will face drought. The Poet who refers to this belief is none other than the celebrated Kapilar, one of the earliest poets of *Sangam* works. The same poet and Pālai Gautama, singing the greatness of the Chera rulers in the *Padirrupattu* poems (69; 24), make a pointed reference the belief that if

Venus remained in its houses it will cause abundance of rains and fertility. Another poet of the *Padirruppattu* group, Kumaṭṭūr Kannanār, states that, if Venus and Mars came together, they will cause drought. Nakkīrar, Nattattanār, Rudrankannanār, and Mangudi Marudanar, among the poets of *Pattupāṭṭu* refer to Venus. That the sun is in association with the planets is referred to by Nattattanār in *Sirupāṇarrupaḍi* (242-44). That the moon moves amidst the stars is referred to by Nakkirar. The word *mīn* is used both in the sense of stars and planets. Planetary astronomy, the luni-solar nature of the calendar and the influence of the planetary positions over human life and environment are well developed in the *Sangam* age. A point of interest is that the *Sangam* works do not seem to refer to weekdays. It has now been established with the help of inscriptions from Meenakshipuram, Pugalur, and Tiruppa-rankuram that the *Sangam* works date around the beginning of the Christian era.

So far as inscriptions are concerned, the earliest inscriptions of India are those of Aśoka. Aśokan edicts, assigned to the third century B.C., clearly indicate the place of astronomy in Indian life. The name of *tithis* like *Ashṭami*, *chaturdasi*, *Panchadasi*, *Paurnamāsi* and the two *pakshas*, and the names of months like *Tishya* are recorded. For example, Aśoka orders that "on the eighth day (*aṭami*) of every fortnight, on the fourteenth and fifteenth, on the *Tishya punarvasu* days, on the fullmoon days of the three seasons and at festivals, bulls should not be castrated." The importance being attached to the natal star of the ruler had a already taken deep roots in the time of Aśoka, whose natal star was *Punarvasu* in the month of *Tishya* (*Tai*).

Jupiter's sixty-year cycle appears in epigraphy for the first time in the (Nagarjunakonda inscriptions of Ikshvāku rulers) in the third century A.D.

The copper plate charters of the early Pallava rulers of Kanchi-puram give astronomical details, but they mainly mention the regnal year of the ruler, month (*māsa*), the fortnight (*paksha*) and the day

(*tithi*). The months referred to are *Chaitra*, *Vaiśākha*, *Jyeshṭa*, *Śrāvana*, *Aśvayuj*, *Kārtika*, *Paushya* and *Māgha*. Three records mention the seasons (*ritu*) without mentioning the months. These relate to the period between the third and the sixth centuries A.D., A point of interest is that none of them refers to the week-days.

Mention has been made earlier that the week day is mentioned in an inscription of Paramesvaravarman I in the seventh century A.D. Two inscriptions of the Pandyas of the eight century A.D, coming from Anaimalai and Tirupparamkunram near Madurai, refer to the Kali year 3871 and 3874 respectively, besides giving the name of the week days. Later Tamil inscriptions are full of astronomical references. It seems to us that there is need to compile the history of Indian astronomy on a rational footing to understand one of the important branches of Indian science.

Appendix I

WILSON THE TRANSLATOR OF THE RIG VEDIC HYMNS ON VEDIC SOCIETY AND THE DASYUS

It has been a favourite notion with some eminent scholars that the Hindus, at the period of the composition of the Rig Vedic hymns, were a nomadic and pastoral people. This opinion seems to rest solely upon the frequent solicitations for food and for horses and cattle which are found in the hymns, and is unsupported by any more positive statements. That the Hindus were not nomads is evident from the repeated allusions to fixed dwellings, villages and towns; and we can scarcely suppose them to have been in this respect behind their barbarian enemies the overthrow of whose numerous cities is so often spoken of. A pastoral people they might have been to some extent; but they were, also, and perhaps, in a still greater degree, an agricultural people, as is evidenced by their supplications for abundant rain and for the fertility of the earth, and by the mention of agricultural products, particularly barley. They were a manufacturing people; for the art of weaving, the labours of the carpenter, and the fabrication of golden and of iron mail are alluded to : and, what is more remarkable they were a maritime and mercantile people.

Not only are the *sūktas* familiar with the ocean and its phenomena, but we have merchants described as pressing earnestly on board ship, for the sake of gain and we have a naval expedition against a foreign island or continent (*dwipa*) frustrated by a shipwreck. They must, also, have made some advance in astronomical computation; as the adoption of an intercalary month, for the purpose of adjusting the solar and lunar years to each other, is made mention of. Civilization must have, therefore, made considerable progress;

and the Hindus must have spread to the sea coast, possibly along the Sindhu or Indus, into Cutch and Gujerat, before they could have engaged in navigation and commerce. That they had extended themselves from a more northern site, or that they were a northorn race, is rendered probable from the peculiar expression used, on more than one occasion, in soliciting long life, when the worshipper asks for a hundred winters (*himas*); a boon not likely to have been desired by the natives of a warm climate. They appear, also to have been a fair complexioned people, at least, comparatively, and foriegn invaders of India; as it is said that Indra divided the fields among his white-complexioned friends, after destroying the indigenous barbarian races : for such, there can be little doubt, we are to understand by the expression Dasyu, which so often recurs, and which is often defined to signify one who not only does not perform religious rites, but attempts to disturb them, and harass their performers : the latter are the Aryas, the Arya, or respectable, or Hindu, or Aryan race. Dasyu, in later language, signifies a thief, a robber and Arya, a wealthy or respectable man : but the two terms are constantly used, in the text of the Veda, as contrasted with each other, and as expressions of religious and political antagonists; requiring, therefore, no violence of conjecture to identify the Dasyus with the indigenous tribes of India, refusing to adopt the ceremonial of the Aryas, a more civilized, but intensive, race, and availing themselves of every opportunity to assail them, to carry off their cattle, disturb their rites, and impede their progress—to little purpose, it should seem, as the Aryas commanded the aid of Indra, before whose thunderbolt the numerous cities, or hamlets, of the Dasyus were swept away.

Appendix II

L. D. SWAMIKKANNU PILLAI'S ANALYSIS OF PARIPADAL —EXTRACT FROM INDIAN EPHIMERIS

247. The ancient Tamil anthology called *Paripadal*, of which an exellent edition in print was brought out in 1918 by the veteran editor of Tamil classics, Mahamahopadyaya Pandit V. Swaminatha Ayyar and of which the date of composition is as yet a mystery, contains, in the eleventh canto, a description of the river Vaigai (near Madura (in flood). The author of this poem Nallantuvanar, commonly believed to be one of the *sangam* poets, to whom we also owe *Kalittogai*, says (that he witnessed the flood on a morning when the moon was eclipsed, when the *nakshatra Krittika* (26.7° to 40° longtitude) was at day-break "high up", *i.e.*, at or near the zenith, when Mars was in *Mesha* (0° to 29° longitude), Jupiter was in *Mina* (330° to 359°), Saturn was in *Dhanus* and going towards *Makara* (say 260° to 269°) Venus in *Rishabha* (30° to 59°) and Mercury in *Mithuna* (60° to 89)°.

248. This extract from the poem is a horoscope in the true sense of the word, for it is a time-record, though one drawn up on the occasion of the occurrence of a flood, not of the birth of a human child. It is just the kind of horoscope that one would expect from the Babylonian prototype. There are many circumstances which make the investigation of this mysterious time-record is difficult as it is interesting. In the first place, if the poem really is very ancient, the poet may have become acquainted only with the mean positions of the planets, and he may have supplemented his knowledge by observing their actual situation in the heavens. Secondly, the above positions are recorded in Tamil verse, whose quaint language cannot be understood even by Tamil readers without a reliable commentary.

In this case the commentator, himself an ancient classical author, Parimelalagar, whose commentary on Tiruvalluvar's *Kural* is well-known, enjoys the reputation of being thoroughly reliable in literary matters and he may be presumed to be no less so in astronomical matters. Thirdly, neither the lunar month nor the position of the sun is referred to directly in the passage, but from the circumstance that *nakshatra Krittika*, whose sidereal longitude is between 26.7° and 40°, was in or near the zenith at daybreak, the commentator, Parimelalagar infers that the sun must have been at or near 90° from this position, *i.e.*, the sun's longitude must have been between 116.7° and 130° since he had not yet risen when the *nakshatra* was in the zenith. If so, the sun must have been in the first few degrees of *Simha rasi*, and the time *must* have been within the first few days of the month of *Avani* or *Simha;* this, in fact, is the commentator's own statement. There is a fourth circumstance which the commentator is careful to note as limiting the position of both sun and moon; for he remarks that as it was a time of lunar eclipse in *Sravana* month, the moon must have been in *nakshatra Sravishtha* or *Dhanishtha* (293.3° to 306.7° according to Surya and Arya siddhantas; 294° 7.5′ to 307°. 7. 40′ according to Brahma Siddhanta and Siddhanta Siromani, see Eye-table, section S); and as the *tithi* or distance from the moon to the sun at the middle of a lunar elipse is exactly 180°, the sun's longitude could not have been less than 113.3° or more than 127° whichever of the four siddhantas was followed; and he could not have been more than 7 days old in *Simha rasi* or month. An astronomer may be disposed to object that the hypothesis of the sun being in *Simha rasi* and the moon in *Dhanishta nakshathra* hangs on a single peg, namely on *Krittika nakshatra* being exactly at the zenith, but the ancient Tamil commentator Parimelalagar, appears to have entertained no doubt on the point. Fifthly, from the position of Mercury, and more especially from that of Venus recorded by the poet, 60° to 89° and 30° to 59° respectively, when the sun was, according to the commentator, between, say, 120° and 127°, it may be inferred (if the commentator is right) that the poet could not have recorded, or even contemplated, actual positions in respect of these

planets. The possibility that he referred to actual positions in respect of Venus and Mercury as well as of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, constitutes in fact the crux of the problem; and we shall examine this alternative later. It will be seen from the anomaly and equation tables of Mercury and Venus (Table IV of the *Indian Ephemeris*) that their maximum distance from the sun is 26° and 48.03°, respectively (*i.e.* the sum of maximum equations for each planet in Table IV), whereas according to the poet's description, Venus was not less than 60° and Mercury not less than 30° from the sun. Thus, in the case of Venus, it is clear that if the sun was really in *Simha*, the poet could have had in view its mean longitude only; and if so, it becomes pertinent to ask whether he did not contemplate mean longitudes in the case of the other planets also. This is our sixth difficulty. (The difference between mean and actual longitudes in the case of Jupiter and Saturn is never very much, but Mars' actual position may be removed by as much as 51·6° from his mean position.)

Seventhly, and lastly, the poet may have recorded the positions of the planets either actually as he saw them in the heavens, or partly as he saw them and partly as he imagined them from his knowledge of astronomy. As we have just observed, however, he could not possibly have seen Venus in the position he has recorded, if the solar month was *Simha* or *Avani*, as stated by his commentator.

Having noted all these seven difficulties, we shall endeavour to solve them, and Table V-A (of my *Ephemeris*) should enable us to do so if there is a solution. To use Table V-A properly, we want two temporary tables which we should make afresh for each problem, and which we shall call respectively "the table for a fixed year" and "the table of moveable years." We note first of all from Table IV the mean positions of the planets in 1 B.C.—0. A.D. (which we treat as our fixed year) at a time when the mean longitude of the sun was about 125°, or when about 130 days of the Indian solar year had passed (Table IV-C). This is a good average time of the year for the occurrence of a lunar eclise in *Sravana*.

Table for fixed year 1 B.C.—0. A.D.

Mean positions of planets at end of 130th day of the Indian solar year, 1 B.C. or 0 A.D.

	Particulars	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn
1.	At commencement of Indian solar year in B.C. 1—0 A.D. (Table IV)	254.74°	163.17°	70.54
2.	Planet's motion for 130 days (Table IV)	68.12°	10.80°	4.35°
3.	Total	322.86°	173.97°	74.89°
4.	Or in nearest degree.	323°	174°	75°
5.	Actual geocentric places recorded by the poet.	0° to 29°	330° to 359°	270° to 299°
6.	Mean positions corresponding to actual positions recorded by the poet (according to planetary eye-table).	320° to 340°	320° to 348°	274° to 303°
7.	To (4) we have to add in order to arrive to (6) mean positions corresponding to those recorded by the poet.	—3° to +17°	146° to 184°	195° to 224°
8.	If the year we are in search of is B.C., then we should in order to reach it add algebraically to (4)	—343° to —3°	—180° to —210°	130° to —160°

We now see the use of Table V-A which will enable us to construct our second table, the one for moveable years, in other words to determine approximately, as first step, the year or years A.D. or B.C. when alone the increases in longitude noted in the last two lines (7) and (8) *supra* were possible. Line (7) of the table will help us in A.D. years and line (8) in B.C. years.

Table V-A does not give the increases of longitude of Venus or Mercury from year to year, because their positions are difficult to follow except in the light of the sun's movements and if the others are right, a difference in the position of Venus and mercury alone may not matter; on the other hand, if in the year that we fix upon, Venus and Mercury happen to be in the position requird by us, so much the better. The actual positions of both Mercury and Venus depend but to a small extent on their mean longitude and principally on the sun's.

It is usually, therefore, enough, provided we know the month, to set to work with the three major planets, Mars, jupiter and Saturn, particularly when we are in search of actual positions. We may repeat once more that the mean longitude neither of Venus nor of Mercury is a guide, except indirectly, to their actual position which is determined by the sun's position coupled with the annual and anomalistic equations of Venus or Mercury as the case may be. We shall find that the search for the positions of three planets is tedious enough when our object is not merely to find when the planets attained certain mean positions, but to locate them in their actual positions in a year satisfying all our conditions. In the case of Mars in particular, we have to bear in mind that the difference between his actual and his mean position varies according to the time of the year. This fact is made evident by Mars' eye-table, which shows us that in order that Mars may be actually in *Mesha* (0° to 29°) on or about the 130th day of the year, his mean position should be between 320° and 340°, and the addition we have to make to the mean position of Mars on the 130th day of our fixed year (1 B.C,) in order to arrive at an actual position in *Mesha rasi* is—30° to +17°

which we have accordingly entered in line (7) of the table in paragraph 250. In the case of Jupiter and Saturn we have taken the precaution to extract their mean positions also from their respective eye-tables, but the difference is not very much in their case.

We find from Table V-A that the only years out of 4,000 which can possibly satisfy most of the conditions of our search (*i.e.*, those as to the moon being in *Sravana* and as to the mean longitudes of the three planets, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) entered in line (6) of the table in paragraph 250 are the following. This will be our table of moveable years from which we should be able to select one to suit our purpose finally. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to include in our table of moveable years in the first instance all possible years, so that even if we have to make another table for our fixed year, as we shall have to do in this case, we may not have to change our second table or table of moveable years.

Table of moveable years with reference to 1 B.C. or 0 A.D., as a fixed year; 130th day of Indian solar year. Mean longitude in fixed year 1 B.C. (v. line 4 of the table in paragraph 250).

323° (Mars) 174° (Jupiter) 75° (Saturn)

Limits of increase sought (v. lines, 7 and 8 of the table in paragraph 250), in other words, quantities to be added to the mean longitudes of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn at full moon in *Sravana*, 1 B.C. in order to arrive at the mean longitudes of the same planets at the end of the same *tithi* in the year sought.

A.D. years :	—3° to +17° (Mars)	+150° to 180° (Jupiter)	200° to 230° (Saturn)
B.C. years :	—343° to —3° (Mars)	180° to 210° (Jupiter)	−130° to −160° (Saturn)

Years	Day of solar year corresponding to *Sravana* full moon	Mars (Tab. V-A)	Jupiter (Tab. V-A)	Saturn (Tab. V-A)
A.D. Years				
A.D. 17 (Lunar eclipse in *Sravana*-see Table II)	134	14	156	208
A.D. 634 (lunar eclipse in *Ashadha*- Table II)	128	31	161	187
A.D. 694 (lunar eclipse in *Asvina*-Table II)	114	355	181	200
A.D. 871 (lunar eclipse in *Bhadrapada*-Table II, sun's longitude 157°)	135	34	153	203
A.D. 931 (no lunar eclipse)	131	358	173	216
A.D. 1050 (lunar eclipse in *Sravana*-Table II)	134	95	185	230
A.D. 1108 (lunar eclipse in *Karttika*-Table II)	123	37	145	219
A.D. 1168 (lunar eclipse in *Asvina*-Table II)	129	1	166	232
A.D. 1548 (lunar eclipse in *Karttika*-Table II)	115	15	178	195
B.C. Years				
A.D—160 *i.e.*, 161 B.C. (lunar eclipse in *Sravana*-Guinness Tables)	...	—25	—176	—155

1	2	3	4	5
A.D.—220, *i.e.* B.C. 221 (no eclipse in *Sravana* but there was a lunar eclipse in May 9, *Rishabha*, solar month-Guinness' Tables).	...	—349	—196	—168
A.D.—397, *i.e.* B.C. 398 (no eclipse in *Sravana*, but there was a lunar eclipse in May 17, which would be the month of solar *Mithuna* or lunar *Jyeshtha*-Guinness' Tables).	...	—28	—168	—171
A.D.—1572, *i.e.* 1573 B.C. (no lunar eclipse).	...	—289	—186	—128

The B.C. years will not yield us any date when there was a lunar eclipse in *Sravana* and when the three major planets were in the positions assigned to them by the poet. Although there was a lunar eclipse in *Sravana* of 161 B.C. the mean positition of Mars was then such that the planet could not actually have been in *Mesha* at full-moon in *Sravana* of that year. The other B.C. years in our table of moveable years are not worth investigating, since there was no lunar eclipse in two of them, while in the third, the eclipse was in *Jyeshtha*, and Mars' mean position (323°—28°, *i.e.* 295°) was not such as to give us as actual position for that planet in *Mesha*.

Incidentally, we may note first that Table V-A is equally useful for a search up to 2000 B.C. or down to A.D. 2000, or for any period of 4,000 years in all. Secondly in order to use Table V-A, it is not necessary that we should make a start always with mean longitudes of 1 B.C. We may start by calculating mean longitudes for any year B.C. or A.D. and, with that as a fixed year proceed to determine,

by addition or substraction according to Table V-A, the mean longitudes attained on the corresponding day in any other year which we may call the moveable year. The mean longitudes of the three superior planets for every 10 completed days in the principal years from which, according to the nature of the problem, the choice of a fixed year will have to be made are given at the beginning of table V-A. These years are 3201, 3102, 2101, 1101, 101, 1 B.C. and A.D. 1000 and 1800. The advantage of making a start with 1 B.C. or 0 A.D. is that each one of the moveable years in our field of selection (the second table) becomes *ipso facto* an A.D. year. This, however is an advantage which we can easily forgo, provided there is any reason for choosing a fixed year other than 1 B.C. The method of substraction for B.C. years has obvious inconveniences and it will generally be better to use the method of addition even for B.C. years, as illustrated in section iii of this chapter, on Rama's horoscope (paragraph 294, p. 118 below).

In A.D. years, if we apply the test of a lunar eclipse in *Saravana* month which, as is the case with eclipses always, ought to be a conclusive test, and if the ancient commentator is right, there is only one year which satisfies more or less the *Paripadal* horoscope, although some critics may demur a good deal to accepting it; and that is A.D. 17 in which the actual positions of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn were, as any one may, with a little trouble, satisfy himself by following the instructions in paragraphs 237 and 239 *supra*, or much more quickly by using tables V-A and V-B.

Mars 25.5° in *Mesha.*
Jupiter 334° or 4° in *Mina.*
Saturn 274.1° or 4° in *Makara.*

Venus' mean longitude at the same date was 28° which was only 2° short of *Rishabha*; it has already been shown (paragraph 248), that *Rishabha* was an impossible *rasi* for the actual position of Venus under the given conditions; in A.D. 17 on *Sravana* full-moon day she was actually in 90.02° (end of *Mithuna* or beginning of *Karkataka*). Mercury's mean longitude at *Sravana* full-moon of 17

A.D. was not *Mithuna*, but 252.77° (*Dhanus*) and his actual position was 156.02° (*Kanya*).

Among the possible A.D. years which we selected with the help of Table V·A there is only one, other than A.D. 17 in which there was a lunar eclipse in *Sravana* month, and that is the year A.D. 1050; but in that year Mars' increase of mean longitude was +95° which would never give us an actual position for Mars in *Mesha* (in fact it yields an actual position 92.57° *i.e.*, 3 degrees in *Karkataka*, the fourth *rasi* instead of the first). Also, in A.D. 1050, neither Venus' mean nor her actual position, was satisfactory. Therefore, apart from consideration of the probable period of the literary work *Paripadal*, A.D. 1050 must be rejected.

The fixation of A.D. 17 as a date for the poem, however satisfactory it might be to the upholders of the theories propounded by the late Mr Kanakasabhai Pillai (in his *Tamils 1,800 years ago*) and by Mr A.Kumaraswami (quoted by Dr Hultzch in *South Indian Inscriptions*, Volume II, Part iii, p. 378, 1895) namely, that the extant *Sangam* literature in Tamil was produced in the first century A.D., runs counter to all probabilities, as inferred in paragraph 245 *supra*, of the period when Indian astronomers could have begun to calculate the movements of the planets. There is a bare possibility, as the writer has already hinted, that the south-Indian astronomers received the elements of the planetary motions from a direct Chaldean source in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, but it has to be remembered that there is no evidence of their having habitually cast horoscope before the seventh century A.D. It would appear that from Alexander's time at least the *Sramanas* (or Jains) boasted of an astronomical learning equal or superior to that of the Brahmanas, and possibly the Jain astronmy inculcated a knowledge of the planetary motions, and Jains were plentiful in southern India from the fourth century B.C. There is also a good deal that has a look of great antiquity about it in the way in which the Tamil people have clung to the solar reckoning when all the rest of India practically followed the lunar reckoning,

in the peculiar way in which they name some of the solar months when ordinarily all other month-names have been confessedly borrowed from Sanskrit, in the many variations of solar month-names, to be found among primitive tribes in southern India, e.g., Tulu month names, noted by Dr. Burnell in his *South Indian Paleography*, and Toda month names on the Nilgiris, noted in Dr Rivers' *Todas*; and lastly in the many synonyms which are to be found, in Tamil only, for the names of *nakshatras* (See *Pingala Nigandu.*)

Still, before accepting A.D.17, one would like to know something about the other evidence for the relative age of this poem *Paripadal*, as compared with other works of the *sangam* age. Most of the productions of that age which have come down to us have come dawn only as anthologies, and this is a class of literature peculiar to Tamil. Hundreds of poets are known to have flourished during the *sangam* age in each part of the Tamil country : of a very few of them like Tiruvalluvar, Ilango-Adigal, Sittalai Sattanar, Tiruttakkatevar (authors of the well-known *Kural*, *Silappadikaram*, *Manimekalai*, and *Jivaka Chintamani*, respectively) we have entire works that have come down to us, as *sangam* works : all the rest are preserved either by name only or in ancient anthologies, called *Padirrupattu*, *Purananuru*, *Ahananuru*, *Naladi*, *Narrinai*, *Kuruntogai*, etc., and we are left to conjecture the period during which these poets' works must have been current, each in its entirety, before their posterity thought it prudent to preserve them in anthologies or excerpts of their works; and such abridgements must have been necessitated by the rapidly accumulating bulk of literature and the difficulty and expense of making copies of entire works. The careful way, too, in which these anthologies were compiled, the number of genuinely good poets whose remains are, as it were, enshrined in them, and the scrupulous accuracy with which they were annotated by eminent commentators, some of them men not less famous than the authors whom they annotated, must make us pause before we can limit the *sangam* period, (even supposing it came to an end about A.D. 800), to less than three or four hundred years before that date;

that is, nobody would have taken the trouble that has been taken with these anthologies or in editing so systematically such minute extracts unless the poets' names were really ancient and nearly as venerable then as they are now. In the allegorical language of the legend associated with the origin of *Naladi*, the *sangam* editors were so fastidious in their choice that they salvaged only those productions which had resisted the devastating flood of time. See further Paper No. (iii) in Appendix "on the chronology of early Tamil Literature".

About *Paripadal* itself, its venerable editor in print tells us in his preface that he was able to secure only two manuscripts (which were copies, the one transcribed from the other) containing the extant portions of the anthology (20 out of 70 ancient selections), and certain other manuscripts containing a few fragments; and it is scarcely likely that any portion of this work, not already published by Mr Swaminatha Ayyar, will ever come to light hereafter and help us to unravel the age of its composition, or supposing that it really belonged to the first century A.D., to enlighten us as to how the poet acquired his knowledge of planetary astronomy. Even so, other portions of the *Paripadal* anthology which deal with developments of Śaivism and Vaishnavism seem to be more recent than the first century A.D., if we are to follow Dr Bhandarkar and other eminent authorities.

We have so far given full credit to the ancient commentator Parimelalagar for correctly interpreting the poet, but we have done so at the expense, so to say, of the positions of the inferior planets, to one of which only (viz. Venus) the commentator's hypothesis of sun in *Simha* and a lunar eclipse in *Sravana* month allows even an approximately correct mean position, while Mercury's position, whether mean or actual, has to be abandoned altogether on that hypothesis. Also, the time of lunar eclipse in *Sravana* month in A.D. 17 was not the morning but, as any one may satisfy himself by computing the sun's and moon's anomalies and equations, at .55 of the day (*i.e.*, an hour after sunset) on the 27th July A.D. 17. This is the first feature that strikes us as defective in the commentator's

hypothesis; for the poet says that, when *Krittika nakshatra* was at or near the zenith at daybreak on a certain day, "presently" (the poet is careful to use the expressive Tamil adverb *ollai*, *i.e.*, 'presently"), there was an eclipse of the moon. The poet would not have referred in these terms to an eclipse which had occurred the previous evening or which was to occur in the evening of the day when *Krittika* was near the zenith in the morning.

We are reluctantly led to the conclusion that the commentator was, like ourselves, trying to make the best of an obscure text, but that not having at hand the astronomical tables that we have, he hazarded his hypothesis about the lunar eclipse having occurred in the month of *Avani* or *Simha*, when the moon was in *nakshatra Dhanishtha* or *Sravishtha*, simply because *Krittika nakshatra* was thought by him to be then at or near the zenith, and also fell into the unpardonable error of supposing that a position of the sun in *Simha rasi* was compatible with Mercury being actually in *Mithuna* or with Venus being actually in *Rishabha*.

It is somewhat dangerous, even in a purely astronomical speculation, to reject the authority of a commentator like Parimelalagar, but the astronomical critic cannot discharge his duty unless he exhausts every reasonable alternative that presents itself; and after all it seems to be more than doubtful whether Parimelalagar was the real author of the commentary on *Paripadal* which passes under his venerable name.

A lunar eclipse in *Ashadha* month, with the sun about 90° in mean longitude, is no doubt more compatible with actual positions for Venus and Mercury in *Rishabha* (30° to 59°) and *Mithuna* (60° to 89°) respectively, and we have a year among the A.D. years in our table of moveable years in paragraph 255, when there was lunar eclipse in *Ashadha*, and that is the year A.D. 634. This eclipse occurred on 17th June 634 and the exact time of its occurrence, according to the *Arya Siddhanta*, as will be seen from one of the specimen problems worked out under the *Arya Siddhanta* Eye-Table (p. 159) was 4.42½ a.m. The centre of the eclipse, according to *Surya*

Siddhanta was the moment of sunrise. (The reader should be able to verify this from Table II and *Surya Siddhanta* Eye-table e, h and y). It looks as if we had got hold of the very kind of lunar eclipse (*grastasthamana*, *i.e.*, the setting of the moon in a state of eclipse, see paragraph 29) that the poet says he actually beheld. It is true that in making a bid for this eclipse, we are setting aside the commentator's hypothesis, that because *Krittika* (30°) was in the zenith at day-break, the sun must have been in or about 120° sidereal longitude. But the poet's description of *Krittika* may mean "at or near the zenith" and it is just as reasonable to suppose that a Tamil poet using the word *uyar* in this context may have employed it to mean "high up" as that he meant "at the zenith". The eclipse was a partial one of 1½ digits and occurred, according to L' *Art de Verifier les Dates* (the standard French work quoted in paragraph 134 *supra*) at 11·30 p.m. in the Paris meridian *i.e.*, about 4½ a.m. next day in the meridian of Madura. At this time the moon was eclipsed for an hour (see paragraph 135). The point of the ecliptic rising at that hour must have been that which rose two hours before the sun, *i.e.*, the 59th degree of the celestial longitude. *Krittika nakshatra* whose initial longitude is form 10° to 26° according to the *Siddhanta* followed must have been at this time (4 A.M.) at least about one-third way up the heavens. By sunrise *Krittika* would have advanced to a point in the heavens about 30° from the zenith to the east. At 4.3° a.m. the darkness of the eclipse, though it was partial, would be such as to allow stars to be distinguished, not-withstanding the full moon, and *Krittika* would still be fairly high up; and 4-30 or 5 A.M. is apparently the time° indicated by the poets expression *pular vidiyal i.e*, at the first dawn.

If we search for a suitable year with a lunar eclipse in *Ashadha* month and with Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in the positions recorded by the poet, we shall want a preliminary table somewhat different from the one in paragraph 250 with which we started. Our starting points for 1 B.C. will then be as follows :

	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn
1. Commencement of Indian solar year in 1 B.C., A.D.O	254.74°	163.17°	70.54°
2. Planet's motion for 89 days	46.64°	7.39°	2.98°
3. Total :	301.38°	170.56°	73.52°
4. Or in nearest degree	302°	171°	74°
5. Positions recorded by the poet	0° to 29°	330° to 359°	270°to299°
6. Mean positions corresponding to those recorded by the poet (by Planetary eye-tables)	314° to 347°	320° to 350°	274° to 303°
7. Number of degrees to be added in each case to (4) in order to arrive at (6).	12° to 45°	150° to 180°	200° to 230°

For Mars we shall now want an increase of longitude (over and above his 1 B.C. longitude) of 12° to 45° for Jupiter 150° to 180° and for Saturn 200° to 230°. We see that these limits are not such as to modify our second table or table of moveable years, on page 103, that is to say, the years included by us in that table will serve us as the possible years in this case also. And there is only one year among the A.D. years included by us in the table on page 103 whicb had a lunar eclipse in *Ashadha*. The possible year 398 B.C. when the sun was in *Rishabha* has to be rejected, because Mars, at the eclipse of that year was as already stated (Paragraph 256) not in *Mesha*. If *Bhadrapada* or *Jyeshtha* were suitable months for the lunar eclipse and for the sun's position, we would have to change our starting table again, but we know—paragraphs 248 and 256—

that the month of *Bhadrapada* would be too late for the recorded positions of Mercury and Venus and in *Jyeshtha* the sun would be too near *Krittika nakshatra*. Moreover our second table would not be different for *Jyestha*, for which the limits of increase of longitude for Mars would be -9° to +30°, limits already included in our table of moveable years, and in that table there is no lunar eclipse in *Jyeshtha*.

The mean longitudes of the five planets at mean sunrise (6.A.M.) on 17th June A.D. 634 (full moon *tithi* of lunar *Ashadha* month when the moon was in a state of eclipse) were as follows :

	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
Mean longitudes	331.92°	330.83°	262.41°	296.23°	371.56°
and the actual positions, whether we follow the instructions in paragraphs 237 and 239 *supra*, or the much simpler processes by the Eye-Tables, or by Tables V-A and V-B, fully illustrated in the next two sections of this chapter (pp. 112 and 133) were—					
actual geo-centric places	16.12°	339.53°	256.51°	41.53°	70.38°
and the *Rasis*	*Mesha*	*Mina*	*i.e. second-half of Dhanus, 13° short of Makara*	*Rishabha*	*Mithuna.*

This seems far more satisfactory than the uncertainties in which we were landed by our first attempt to follow the ancient commentator's hypothesis at all costs. All the planets are now in the actual positions recorded by the poet and we have not lost even one, not even Mercury, though we made no special endeavour to search either for that planet or for Venus. It is true that our result for Saturn is 13° short of *Makara* but that in all probability is what

the poet himself means. His verse (see page 109) may be translated : "Saturn was at the end of *Vil* (*i.e.*, *Dhanus*) and was going to *Makara*," which makes much better sense of the text than the commentator's gloss : "Saturn was in the *rasi* following *Dhanus i.e.*, in *Makara*" Moreover as happily pointed out to the author by Mr Manikka Nayagar, Tamil *Virkadai* might mean what the commentator says, but Tamil *villirkadai*, the expression actually used by the poet, can only mean "at the end of *vil.*, *i.e.*, of *Dhanns*" not "after *Dhanus*". The commentator is, however, right in noting that the poet evidently views with satisfaction the fact that each of the planets Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus and Mercury was either in his own house (*svakshetra*), or, (in the case of Saturn) going to it. In astrology, Mars permanently owns, or is lord of, *Mesha*, Jupiter is lord of *Mina*, Saturn of *Makara*, Venus of *Rishabha*, and Mercury of *Mithuna*. A planet like Saturn going to his own house is said to be very powerful, even though he may not be actually in it. We have also to note (see paragraph 297 below) that according to the *Surya Siddhanta*, Saturn's place in 101 B.C. was 6° in advance of the place assigned to him in this work, and in A.D. 900, the planet occupied nearly the same place as he would by this work. In A.D. 600 his place by *Surya Siddhanta* must have been at least 2.4° in advance of what is deducible from the present work. We say "at least" 2.2°, because subsequently a *bija* was admitted in the case of Saturn which, if it had been accepted in A.D. 634, would have had the effect of advancing by several degrees the position of Saturn, just what we want in order to satisfy the commentator; but we must at the same-time remark, that the *bīja* was in all probability adopted after A.D. 900 when the position of Saturn by *Surya Siddhanta* began to fall behind his actual position in the heavens (see Table in paragraph 297, page 121 below, and also Burgess' *Surya Siddhanta*, page 165, and Bentley's *History*, page 126). We may take it that Saturn's mean place by *Surya Siddhanta* was about 260° or 10° short of *Makara*. What tables were used in India in A.D. 634 for ascertaining Saturn's actual place we do not know. On the particular morning in question, Saturn was above the horizon when the sun was

rising (sun being in 86th degree and Saturn in 256th of longitude). About 5 a.m., Saturn may have been just above the horizon or just below it; but the poet evidently was able to calculate where Saturn was at the time, whether or not he saw it in the heavens during the eclipse.

The poet does not say that the sun was in *Simha*; which he would surely not have omitted to note if that had been the case, because *Simha* is the sun's own house and the poet evidently noticed the fact that the five planets Mars, Juplter, Saturn, Venus and Mercury, were each in (or going to) his own house. The moon's own house is *Karkataka* or cancer, and the moon just then was in *Dhanus* (256° mean longitude).

On the whole, we need have no doubt now but that the poet was writing about the lunar eclipse which happened at or a little before sunrise on 17th June A.D. 634; and if our solution is at all near the mark, it furnishes us with a with a very reliable landmark in the history of Tamil *Sangam* literature, a landmark which, incidentally, is in perfect accord with another which was brought to light by the author some years ago, viz. the date A.D. 756 to be inferred from *Silappadikaram.* If Tables V-A and V-B had rendered to chronology no other service than to enable us to solve this one chronological riddle, they would be worth all the trouble expended on their compilation. Table V-A. is most useful when we know for certain the solar or the lunar month of a horoscope; but it is equally useful when we have to guess the month in the first instance; for the position of Mercury and Venus will then enable us to make a rough guess of the month and Mars we need only a table of moveable years with fairly wide limits of increase of longitude, like the one we actually framed with the help of the Mars Eye-table. The limits of Jupiter and Saturn do not vary very much, as we may see from their Eye-tables, for one month or for another. It is well to note thus the different ways in which our tables of fixed and moveable years should be adjusted to suit the mean and actual movements of the different planets.

The author has already taken the opportunity, in paragraphs 216 to 219, to warn the reader that in fixing the mean sidereal periods of planetary revolutions adopted in this work, he has followed, so to speak, no particular *siddhanta* but a *siddhanta* of his own. The reasons for this unusual procedure on his part are (1) that no two *siddhantas* agree in this important matter, (2) that *bijas* are freely admitted for planets in the Indian *siddhantas*, and one can never be certain in epigraphical research whether a particular record did or did not make allowance for *bija* (3) that one never knows which *siddhanta* to follow, and (4) that where there is an antecedent probability, as in the case of the visible planets, that the person who framed a record did so after checking his calculations by ocular observation of the planets themselves in the heavens, more weight should be attached to the actual position of the planets, as a guide in fixing the time of the record, than to the particular *siddhanta* which may have been followed or to the particular *bija* which was not allowed for. Experience, and the unsolicited testimoney of numerous correspondents, particularly of Mr Ketakar, the well-known author of "*Jyotir-Ganima*" has shown that the present author in employing his own planetary *siddhanta* in Table V-B, has hit off, very accurately, for purposes of historical research, the actual positions of all the five planets. In the particular case expounded in this section, the place assigned to Saturn agrees very well with that which would follow from Professor Jacobi's Tables published in *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XII (1912). The mean place of Saturn on the day in question was according to Professor Jacobi, 294°+322°, 37'+5°, or 33' or 262°, 10' whereas the mean place found above and fully worked out in paragraph 239 *supra* is 260°, 24' 6". (It has already been shown in pragraph 268 that according to *Surya Siddhanta*, without *bija*, which Professor Jacobi follows, Saturn's place in A.D. 634 must have been 2° in advance of that arrived at by means of this work). The actual place, according to Professor Jacobi, must be equally close to the actual place arrived at above, because his tables, like those in Table IV of this work, are taken from Warren, who adopted them from Vavilala Kuchinna, a Telugu astronomer of the twelfth or thirteenth century A.D.

Paripadal, canto 11, lines 4-10.
(Edition of 1918 by *Mahamhopadhyaya* V. Swaminatha Ayyar)
The Tamil Text

Urugelu velli vanderriyal sera
varudayyay ppadimakan vayppa
pporuderi
pundi mitunam poruda
ppularvidiya
lanki yuyarnirpa vandanan
pankuvi
nillatunaikkuppa leyda virayaman
villir kadaimakara mevappam
pollai
madiya maraya varunalil.

English Translation

"On a day when bright Venus joined with the Bull, when Mars obtained the Ram, when wise Mercury joined with *Mithuna*, at the first dawn, when *Krittika* stood high up, when Jupiter was beyond the two houses of Saturn, and when Saturn was at the end of *Dhanus* and going to *Makara*, and Rahu was fast causing an eclipse of the moon . . . . . .

Parimelalagar's Commentary

"The poet says that *Krittika* was on high at daybreak in order to indicate that the sun was in *Simha*.

"*i.e.*, when Saturn, the brother of Yama had reached *Makara* which comes after *Dhanus*."

"The meaning of pampollai......varunal is that it was *Sravishtha nakshatra* on the full-noon day of the month of *Avani*. Therefore, it is evident that the moon and Rahu were in *Makara*, and Ketu in the seventh house from *Makara i.e.*, in *Karkataka*."

"The sense of the pasage is 'at an eclipse of the moon on a day of *nakshatra Sravishtha* in the month of *Avani*, when the planets were in the *rasis* which are their own houses."

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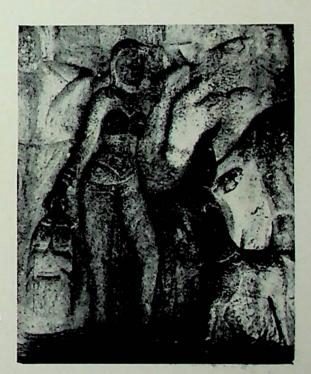
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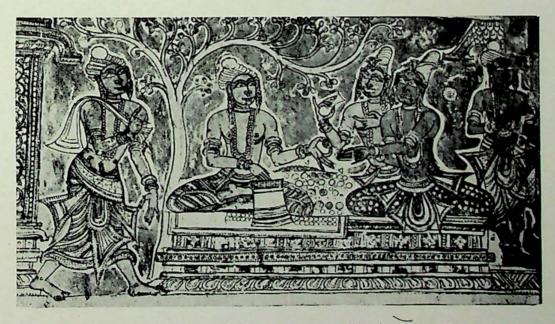
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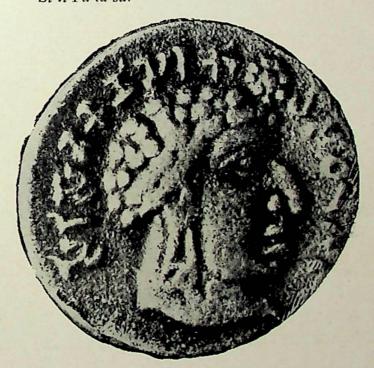
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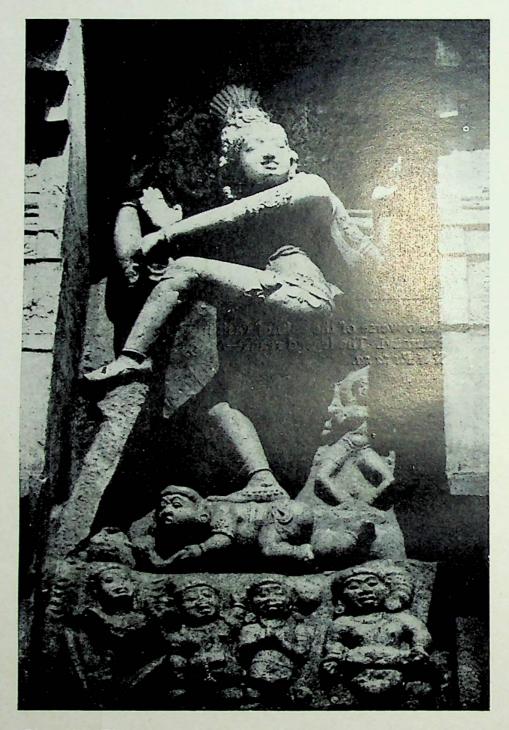
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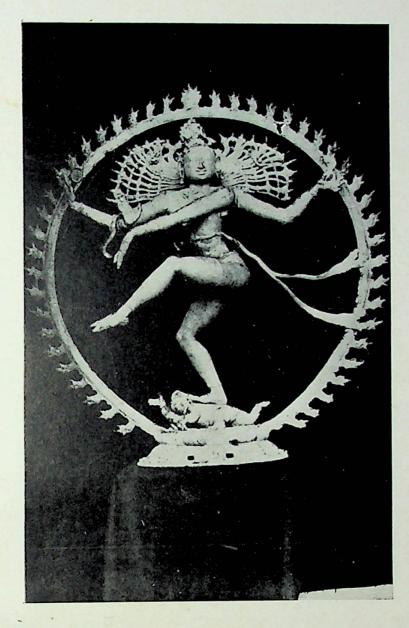
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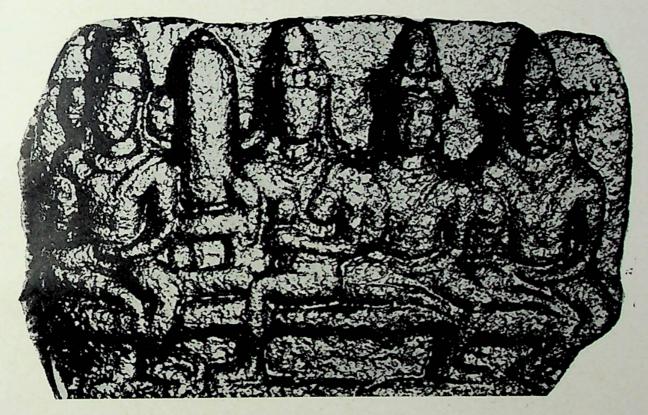
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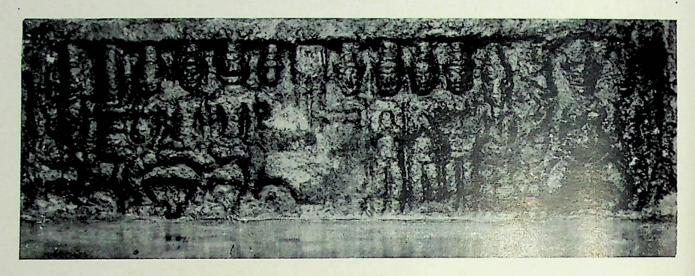
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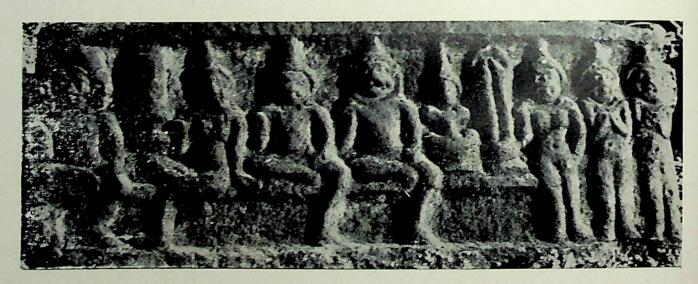
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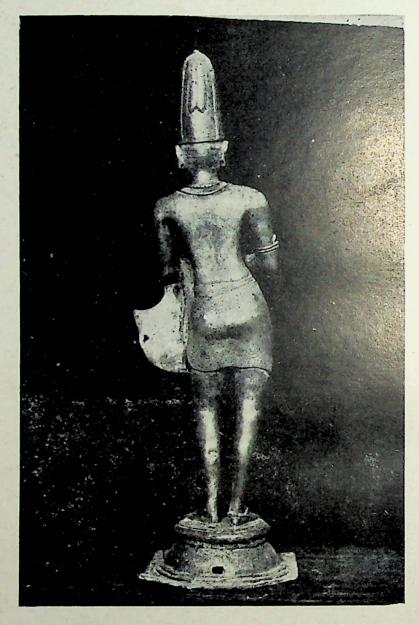
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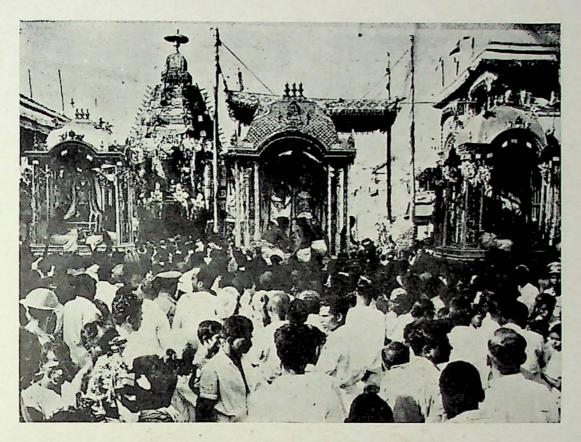
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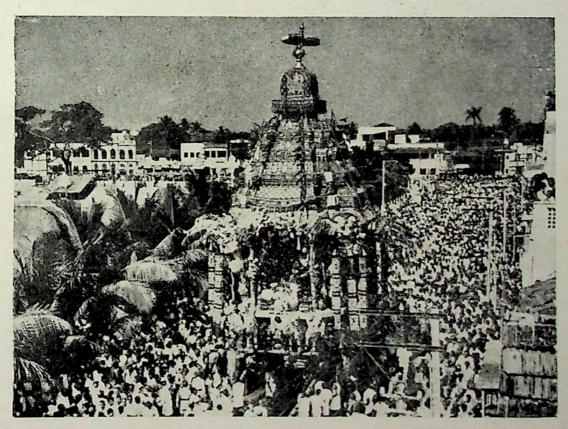
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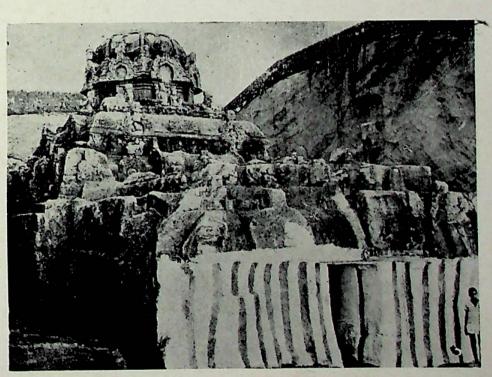
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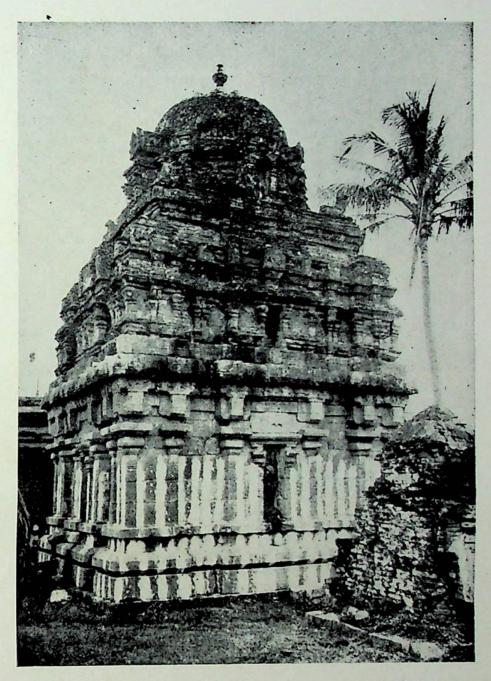
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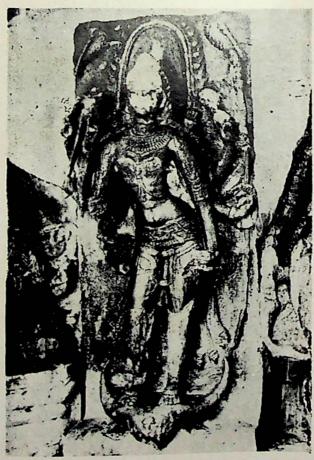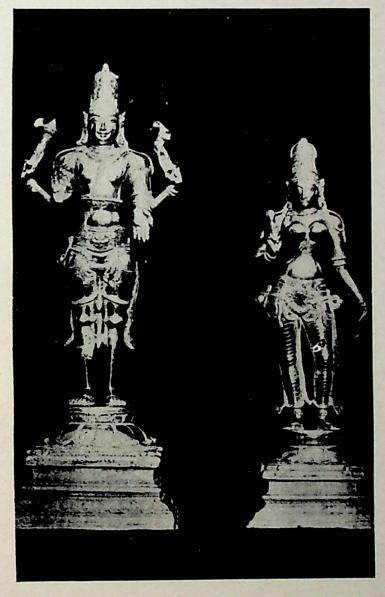
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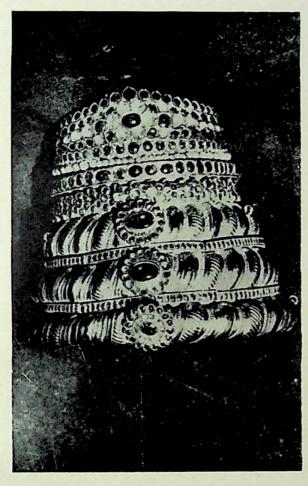
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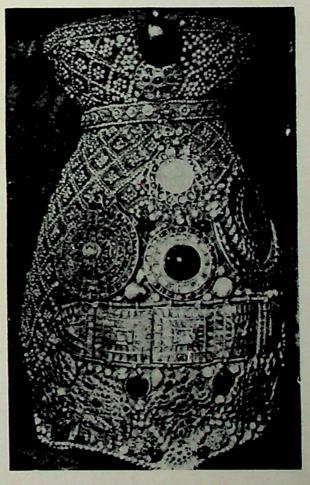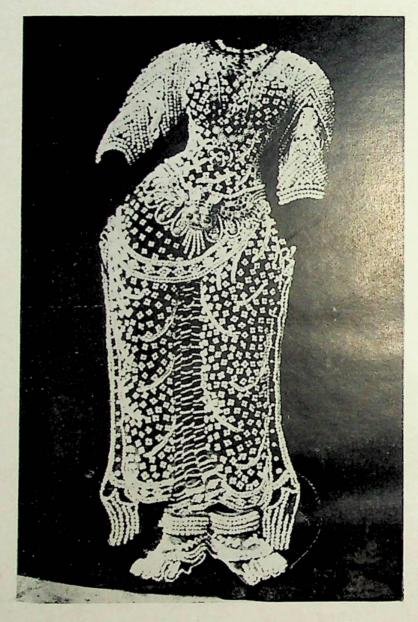
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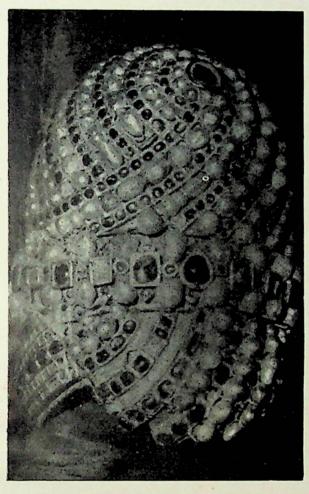
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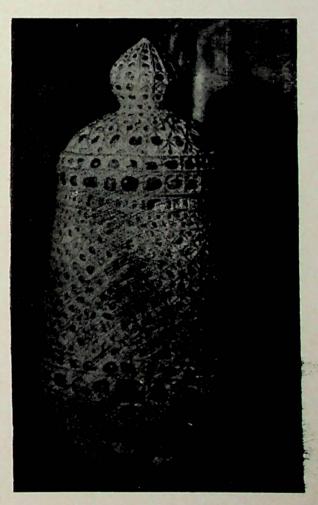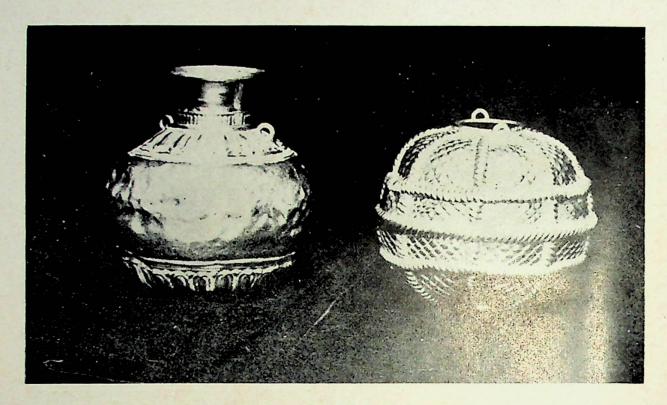
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Jacket designed by Vishwanath Adlakha